Ka Tū te Whare, Ka Ora:
The Constructed and Constructive Identities of the Māori Adoptee

Identity construction in the context of Māori adoptees' lived experiences

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Health Sciences

at Canterbury University, Christchurch
Aotearoa New Zealand

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2020

Abstract

The question "who am I?" is an enduring one which invokes a variety of responses depending on a person's social and cultural context. Such a question suggests that there might be a singular, plausible 'answer'. It also conveys the need to know a 'self' in relation to others, and to have an 'identity'. As a key preoccupation in contemporary society, identity is a "blurred but indispensable concept" (Tilly 1996, 7), and a central focus of theorising and research (Howard 2000, 367). Its varied use reflects and generates a diversity of meanings (Côté 2006, 7; Wetherell 2010, 3), however there are concerns about the distance between academic theorising and 'lay' conceptualisations of identity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 11).

Identity has assumed a central focus in adoption research, and has come to be understood as one of the primary concerns for adoptees (Grotevant 1997, 7). A transition from identity viewed as an internally-generated, continuous, stable and coherent property, to a socially produced, fragmented, dynamic, contradictory and multi-layered construction (Wetherell 2010, 3-4; Woodward 1997b, 11, 13) is evident across the field of adoption studies. However, rather than provide blanket support or challenge to the opposing poles of either extreme (individual, agential, objective and essentialist versus social, structural, subjective and relative), the experiences of transracial adoptees illuminate the 'middle ground' between (Patton 2000, 2, 71, 79; Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 83).

In Aotearoa New Zealand research relating to transracial adoptees is limited, despite their significant representation within the approximately 80,000 children legally adopted between 1955 and 1985. This inquiry combined critical realism, kaupapa Māori and hermeneutic phenomenology to address two research questions. First, what are Māori adoptees' lived experiences of being adopted and being Māori? Second, how does 'identity' feature in Māori adoptees' understandings and interpretations of these experiences? In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 Māori men and women adopted in closed stranger adoptions between 1960 and 1976. Interview narratives revealed the discursive and extra-discursive dimensions of 'being-adopted-and-Māori', characterised by two central concerns of 'realness' and 'difference' and underpinned by a meta-theme of loss. In a context of dominant, biocentric discourses of family, personhood, race and culture, identity was experienced as paradoxically and simultaneously essential and constructed, with participants in search of a 'comfortable' position not always able to be realised in their 'becoming bio-genealogical'. This study demonstrated Māori adoptee identities as intersectional ontological-level projects that both enrich and unsettle narrow conceptions of ethnic, cultural and adoptive identity.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been a long time in the making, over an eventful period. I accepted the offer of employment for my first academic position at the University of Canterbury in 2011, shortly before the February 22 earthquake. In the years since, I've also said goodbye to some very important people in my life – my birth grandfather Leicester in 2014, my adoptive grandfather Stanley in 2015, and my birth father Rāwiri in 2017. Moe mai rā.

The PhD has been a constant through the ups and downs of my life over the past 9 years. It has been a privilege to have been engaged in this research, a personal as well as professional exploration. I would not have reached this point without the support of a large number of people.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to those who were willing to share their experiences with me for the purpose of the PhD, but also so that this might raise awareness of 'our story' in the public domain. The stories you shared were powerful and poignant, and I honour each of you for your strength and generosity. Ngā mihi nunui.

Second, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Ali Dixon and Dr Denise Blake for seeing me through to completion. Ali, you have been a wonderful support to me since 2016, and your belief in my research and I has been invaluable. Denise, there is no doubt that your input has strengthened this work, and I feel very fortunate to have had the benefit of your critical adoption and research insights. I have learned so much from you both, e mihi ana ki ngā wāhine mōhio.

Thanks also to Dr Jeffrey Gage, Dr Paul Whitinui and Professor Angus Macfarlane, who were part of my supervision team in the early stages. At several points your contributions led to critical decisions; this inquiry would not have unfolded the way it did without your input. I've also had the support of many colleagues who made themselves available to talk about my topic, and have offered sage advice when needed – Dr Shanee Barraclough, Dr Sonja Macfarlane, Professor Michael Tarren-Sweeney, Dr Sarah Whitcombe-Dobbs, Dr Richard Manning, Dr Sarah Lovell, Tracy Clelland, Kate Reid, Dr Judi Miller, thank-you all!

I have also had the tremendous privilege of working on an adoption and whāngai-focused Marsden grant with a very special rōpū of Te Wānanga o Raukawa-based researchers since 2017. Ani, Moana, Kim, Helen, Maria, Denise, Jenni and Jessica – our mahi has been a very important counterpoint to my PhD research, and I treasure our time and wānanga together.

I would like to extend a warm thank-you also to Whiti Hereaka, who kindly granted me permission to cite her beautiful work at the beginning of each of the findings chapters, and the afterword. It was almost as if Whiti's words had been written for 'us', they so aptly describe many of the experiences that were recounted within this research.

Last and certainly not least, my heartfelt gratitude to my family and whānau. You have always 'been there', at times providing welcome relief and reality. You walk the adoption journey with me every day, and parts of my story are also yours. This thesis is a new chapter in that story, one that couldn't have been written without you all behind me. Ngā mihi aroha.

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The whare that stands, is well

I have drawn on the metaphor of the *whare* (house) for its culturally-specific meanings related to identity, and the parallels of construction and function. *Whare nui* (meeting houses) were traditionally constructed to represent a central ancestor, and they are adorned with the images of others. This is where kinship groups (*hapū, iwi:* subtribes, tribes) record their history and who they are in carving, painting and weaving (Brown 2014). The physical structure of the whare provides not only shelter, but a place to stand as a genealogical being (*tūrangawaewae*) (Prendergast 2012, 9-10; Smith, Tinirau and Smith 2019, 8-9). Thus, the whare is both a site for, and a symbol of, individual and collective identity.

A note on referencing

This thesis is formatted according to Chicago Author-Date referencing style. This accounts for the inclusion of page numbers, and the use of the word 'and' rather than '&' in in-text citations. In the data analysis sections, participants' quotes are formatted based on their length; if less than 100 words, they are incorporated within the text within quotation marks, and if 100 words or more, they are formatted as indented, stand-alone pieces of text without quotation marks. Participant quotes are not italicised according to the Chicago convention but words or phrases are italicised to add emphasis. Finally, quotation marks at the end of a sentence are placed after the full-stop, and double and single quotation marks are distinguished. Within the thesis text, single quotation marks are used for specialised terms, or terms with a particular meaning that is being emphasised. As mentioned above, double quotation marks are used for phrases taken directly from cited sources.

A note on Māori language

Māori words and phrases are italicised at first mention in the text, followed by an English translation in brackets, or the surrounding sentence. A glossary of Māori words is located after the References section.

Prologue

Back to the beginning

…The ritual began with prayer, chanting and drumming, and the thrashing of herbs and branches against the hot rocks. Water was periodically splashed onto the rocks, generating steam. Instructions were issued at intervals for the helpers to bring in additional rocks, to raise the temperature of the lodge. At a certain point, the elder addressed us directly, informing us that he was going to take us back to day zero, to the womb. My initial response to this was intense nervousness – what pain and grief would I encounter or experience in returning to the womb? Given the circumstances in which I was conceived, carried, born and then relinquished, how could this be a good thing?

It was clear that for others in the lodge this was a profound and perhaps difficult experience; soon after the ceremony began, I heard sobbing from someone behind me. Their sobbing continued for the duration of the sweat[1], and, inferring what might have triggered their distress, I found myself also crying for our predicament as colonised peoples. Despite being a shared or communal experience, there was an unspoken understanding that the sweat was also individual and deeply personal. Any sobbing therefore ought not be quietened or stifled, but allowed to run its course, of expression and release.

The elder's exact words are lost to me now, but throughout the sweat he provided a narrative of being born into the world from our ancestors, following the lines of generations, praying to the Creator, giving thanks for our being in the world, ending with the oft-repeated phrase "all my relations". He encouraged us to think about what was there at "day zero", what we were finding in this metaphysical space and process, and to share any thoughts, images, dreams, words, songs or visions that were revealed to us. As my turn came, I chose to speak succinctly to what I was feeling in that moment: life and light, thanks and appreciation. I was surprised to find that rather than pain

[1] A "sweat" is a long-standing indigenous Canadian and American ceremony of purification, held inside a sweat lodge, a dome-shaped hut made from natural materials. Rocks are heated on a fire outside the lodge for some hours, and placed inside the lodge during the ceremony. The water and steam are meant to cleanse those who enter. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sweat-lodge

and heaviness, I felt lightness…Perhaps I did come from somewhere good, perhaps by association I was not inherently bad or sad?

As I processed the experience that night and the following days, the insights that had ensued became clearer. I did not see images, or dreams, but I *felt and thought*, absorbing and connecting the sweat narrative to my imagining of being back in the womb. The understanding that emerged in the sweat was that "I have to appreciate the life I've been given, in order to appreciate the life I have given." In that lodge I felt nothing but gratitude for my mother for giving me life, and realised that without valuing this, I could not value adequately, my boys' births and lives. We are here, part of a continuous line, connected through spirit, flesh, blood and bone, and that is to be appreciated and celebrated.

This account is from a sweat I was privileged to be a part of, in British Columbia, Canada, October 2009. I was part of a small contingent of Māori researchers contributing to the development of a joint research funding proposal with indigenous Australian and Canadian partners. The *kaupapa* (purpose or agenda) of that trip and the funding application itself was indigenous health through traditional healing. We gathered together in Pemberton as indigenous representatives from our respective nations. This was one of the first experiences we were to have outside of the research development activities, as people rather than researchers; we were participants in and recipients of traditional healing practice, rather than detached proponents.

As is evident from my reflection on the sweat lodge ceremony, I was deeply moved by the experience. As a Māori adoptee, the notion of a metaphorical return to my mother's womb was something I was reticent about – I did not know what that would feel like. Perhaps unlike those with a more normative narrative of being carried, birthed and raised by their birth mothers, I did not have the security or comfort of that origin story. However, the promise of re-connection with that time and space was enticing – would I learn that a Primal Wound[2] *was real*, would it verify my embodied knowing that my birth and subsequent relinquishment *was* of consequence, even though I have no memory of the event itself?

Of no less significance was participating in an indigenous ceremony which enabled me to reconcile my adoptive status *with* my indigeneity. This starting point made room for all of us

[2] The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child (1993), was written by Nancy Verrier, an adoptive mother. Verrier drew on information about pre- and perinatal psychology, attachment, bonding and loss to clarify the effects of separation from the birth mother on adopted children. She posited that the "primal wound" is what results from the disruption of physical, physiological and psychological bonds between mother and child, with profound effects on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the child and adult adoptee.

irrespective of our subsequent trajectories, in an indigenous frame. However, to paint a scene of cultural ease and fit would be disingenuous – in the wider context of the excursion itself, I was hyper-aware of my appraisal by my indigenous colleagues, understanding that as a Māori adoptee, my position there was somewhat tenuous. Brought up by 'the coloniser', did I fall on the right or the wrong side of history? It was not *my people* that we were fighting for in the research kaupapa, it was not about us, but then when has it ever been?

The sweat lodge took place some 14 years after I was first reunited with my birth parents and *whānau* (family); surely enough time to work out the issues of being-adopted-and-Māori, to become comfortable in my own skin and in the Māori world? In all that time, and ever since, I have been in a process of "becoming bio-genealogical", a state that I realise now will never be "as if not adopted", characterised by an ebb and flow, in which courage and fear, strength and vulnerability wax and wane. My being-Māori is fragile, brittle, and I have drawn on a variety of narratives over the years to fashion myself a legitimate belonging in the Māori world. I have not reached the bilingual, bicultural endpoint that I anticipated as a 19 year old; the barriers have been both internal and external. As I enter my mid-40s, I am now looking for comfort more than 'mastery'. The transformation I seek is less an adopted self that fits and more a world that can fit our adopted selves. That this entails an exploration of structure and discourse, as much as individual experiences and narratives, is apparent.

Coming to adoption academically

When I began my PhD journey focusing on adoption, I had lived the subject position "being-adopted-and-Māori" for nearly four decades. My knowledge was primarily experiential; I did not know adoption academically; that is, what was known or not known, by whom, and according to which theoretical frameworks. What I *knew* was that adoption generated awkwardness and silence, that it was frowned upon to ask too many questions, or appear too preoccupied with your adopted situation. Now an experienced researcher, I felt better equipped to explore *why*.

I was cognisant of what some claim are the perils of researching a topic of personal significance – that I was perhaps too close to the subject matter, and there was potential for my experiences to influence my collection and analysis of data (Greene 2014, 2). However, I was confident that with the appropriate methodological choices and supervisory oversight (see Chapters Five, Six) I could manage this, and instead value and utilise my shared understanding as an additional source of insight (Aguilar 1981, 26; Greene 2014, 4; Chavez 2008, 475).

I was also conscious of not overestimating my "insider positionality" – the alignment or sharing of aspects of my 'self' or identity with participants (Chavez 2008, 475). I could not make the

assumption that as a Māori adoptee I would share entirely the experiences of Māori adoptee participants, nor they with me. I needed to acknowledge the situatedness of my own social position, experiences and understandings (my adoptionality: Zhao 2012, 204[3]), and those as mine only; the extent to which these were common or not to those of my participants needed to be queried rather than presumed. I wanted to honour Māori adoptees as a "community of knowers" (myself included), with something important to contribute to scholarship and knowledge in the area (Dotson 2014, 123).

Similarly to many other Māori adoptees, I was not well acquainted with 'my' adoption community; as products of adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand we were isolated from one another. As one of the impacts of the secrecy, omissions, silence and stigma surrounding closed stranger adoption, there has been a relative lack of community and collectivisation among Māori adoptees. I postulate that this makes an established or unified adoptee position or shared positionality (and therefore 'capture') less likely. However, this isolation and silence has also resulted in the epistemic exclusion of Māori adoptees, or their restriction from participating in the production of knowledge about adoption (Dotson 2014, 123).

Aside from my own experience of adoption, I needed to know, what do *others know* about Māori adoptees? It is well-established that adoption research and literature was for some time dominated by adoptive parents, as participants, advocates and researchers (Park Nelson 2016, 74-8; Peña 2017, 198; McGinnis, Baden, Kim and Kim 2019, 4-5;), but more recently, as adoptees have come of age, forms of "me-search" undertaken by adoptees has increased (Kim and Lee 2020, 13). Apart from Māori adoptee accounts included in a selection of books about adoption[4], it was not until 2011 that the first accounts authored by Māori adoptees about Māori adoptees, were produced. Two Masters theses were completed soon after I began my PhD, one led by an adoptee (Haenga-Collins 2011), and another the daughter of an adoptee (Newman 2011). The following year, another Masters thesis was produced (West 2012), and a PhD thesis in 2017 (Haenga-Collins 2017). Thus, academic understanding of the experiences of Māori adoptees has grown to include several accounts focused on the same phenomenon with a largely similar focus – that of the impacts on the Māori adoptee in terms of self and identity. As such, the focus of my work is intended to add to, rather than replicate my peers' work.

[3] Zhao (2012, 204) uses the term "adoptionality" to refer to "the categorical difference related to 'being adopted'." Here I am suggesting it might be used to refer to one's positionality towards being adopted (as a positioning), where positionality refers to "one's imagined relation or standpoint relative to that positioning" and positioning relates to one's structurally determined and discursively mediated location within a given social reality (Sanchez 2006, 38).

[4] Howarth (1988, 74-82) includes a Māori adoptee's story in her book about adoption reunion, Else (1991) includes extracts from interviews with Māori adoptees in her book, Armstrong and Slaytor (2002) present the stories of two Māori adoptees in their Australasian account of transracial adoption, and Hylton (2007, 72-5) incorporates a Māori counsellor's experiences with Māori adoptees in her Master's dissertation.

In her seminal social work-oriented research of Māori adoptees adopted into Pākehā[5] families, Haenga-Collins (2011) laid out a series of narratives focused around belonging and *whakapapa* (genealogy). Many of these narratives corresponded implicitly or explicitly with identity, building a rich picture of Māori adoptee experiences of discovering, negotiating and establishing who they are. Newman (2011) and West (2012) followed with a more specific focus on Māori adoptee identities, Newman from Māori studies and West from social psychology embedded in notions of cultural and ethnic identities respectively. Rather than confine exploration of Māori adoptee identity challenges to those specific aspects, to I decided to focus on identity in general. However, I also recognised the potential risks of framing my inquiry with participants in terms of identity; that is, participants being led or primed to talk about their adoptive experiences with an explicit focus on identity could potentially limit the findings. Drawing a narrow boundary may exclude some pertinent data or understandings. Given the fledgling nature of the Māori adoption research field overall, there was scope for a broader inquiry. In combination with a wider exploration of the adoption and identity literature (see Chapters Two and Three), and as I explain in Chapters Five and Six, I chose to gather information about participants' experiences of being-adopted-and-Māori, to see what of those experiences might be construed as, or contribute to, notions of "identity". Accordingly, I formulated the following research questions:

1. What are Māori adoptees' lived experiences of being adopted and being Māori?

2. How does 'identity' feature in Māori adoptees' understandings and interpretations of these experiences?

Critical adoption studies

Alongside the growth of Māori adoption research, there has also been a growth in critical adoption studies. As an emerging field, the boundaries and foci of critical adoption research are being debated, but the use of the adjective "critical" makes clear its intentions: to question and "complicate" views of adoption, family and kinship (Park Nelson 2018, 20). The field seeks to do this by i) analysing discourses about adoption and depictions of adoption triad members in order that adoption tropes[6] in policies, practices and cultures might be deconstructed; ii) foregrounding the voices of those previously marginalised in public or academic adoption discourses; and iii) utilising an array of

[5] The term Māori is used to refer to indigenous New Zealanders, as the "normal, usual, natural, common or ordinary" inhabitants of *Aotearoa* (the Māori term for New Zealand), distinguishable from non-Māori, people not of Māori descent or origin. The term Pākehā is used to refer to New Zealanders of European origin (www.maoridictionary.co.nz).
[6] A significant or recurring themes, a motif (Stevenson, 2015).

disciplinary knowledges, theoretical frameworks and methodologies (Park Nelson 2018, 20). The socially and culturally constructed nature of adoption is assumed (Homans 2018, 1), and thus it is through literature with a social constructionist lens that the following review chapters explore adoption and identity.

Within critical adoption studies adoption is both the subject of inquiry, *and* a critical lens through which key features of human existence such as race, identity and kinship may be looked at, in new ways (Homans 2018, 2). Critical adoption research aligns with the transformative and emancipatory objectives of a kaupapa Māori approach that underpin this study (see Chapter Five, 66-8, 71-6), and also perceives that there is intrinsic value in adoptionality. This framing, together with a Ricoeurian (narrative) hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, accords meaning and importance to *all* aspects of Māori adoptees' experiences, the positive, the problematic and the intersectional.

The orientation of this study – qualitative, critical and "insider"-led – extends beyond the bounds of my public health training. My liminality expands beyond being-adopted-and-Māori, to that of a public health-trained kaupapa Māori researcher, embracing an undeniably personal and political topic. Articulating my Māori adoptee researcher voice counter to the more detached conventions in which I was trained, has not always been comfortable. Nevertheless, I will harness the value of being 'in-between' worlds that characterises Māori adoptionality and my researcher/research orientation, drawing on critical adoption studies as a platform to do so. Just as the beginning of this section considered the background and origins of this PhD topic, the next section turns to the origins of closed stranger adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand. Doing so positions Māori adoptees and their experiences in wider societal, institutional and discursive contexts, and provides some sense of the scale and impetus of adoption as a social practice and phenomenon. The concept of identity is also explored in order to lay some theoretical foundations and provide a framework to link the workings of discourse with Māori adoptee subjectivities and identities.

Chapter One:
Situating Adoption & Identity

Adoption as socio-historical and legal practice

The adoption of children by people other than the child's biological parents is a practice that has existed since the earliest human societies (O'Shaughnessy 1994, 37; Griffith 1997a, 1-2). Adoption is not practiced homogeneously however, and has taken a variety of forms across different times and places, distinguishable along written-oral, legal-customary and formal-informal axes (O'Shaughnessy 1994, 37). Motives for adoption range from kinship, inheritance, allegiance/service and labour, to welfare and enabling childless couples to become parents (O'Halloran 2015, 10-13).

In Aotearoa, the institution of *whāngai*[7] (customary child placement) pre-dated European contact and settlement. Whāngai was a relatively common practice in which children were given to someone other than their birth parents to be raised. Such an arrangement was not necessarily permanent, and it was openly acknowledged; this meant that whāngai children remained children of their birth whānau, and they retained the right to know their whakapapa (Mikaere 1994, 136). Practised in this way, whāngai served to strengthen whānau and kin connections (Bradley 1997, 38). However, in the course of the colonisation of Aotearoa and the imposition of British law via the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the communal and collective structure of Māori society was progressively undermined (Mikaere 1994, 133; Sorrenson 1975, 107). Customary practices such as whāngai came to the attention of nineteenth century policymakers as factors that threatened Māori "progress" toward civilisation (Williams 2001, 179).

In 1881, Aotearoa New Zealand was the first country in the British Empire to make legal adoption possible with the passing of the Adoption Act, preceding England by 45 years (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2009, 14; O'Halloran 2015, 451). The Act claimed to benefit children under 12 years who were "deprived of their natural guardians", and who without provision would "be exposed to want and privation" (Griffith 1997a, 5). Despite the formal legal process, the Act was supposed to maintain a level of openness: submissions could be made by

[7] The literal meaning of whāngai is to feed, nourish or nurture, which infers the nurturing of a child in the fullest sense, including instruction and affection (Bradley 1997, 37).

any person, birth parents could withdraw consent at any time prior to the adoption order, adoptee birth certificates included birth names, birth parent names, and adoptive parents and birth parents retained access to each other's identity (Griffith 1997b, 45). The Act also sought to accord adoptive parents a degree of legal security (New Zealand Law Commission 1999, 13). Legal adoptions remained relatively rare however, and were more likely to be of older children rather than newborn babies on account of being viewed as less of an economic liability (NZ Law Commission 1999, 13; Goldson 2003, 246). Consequently, women who gave birth to ex-nuptial children were most likely to keep their children, as a "fitting punishment" for their sins of having sex outside of marriage. Illegitimacy was a stigmatised condition, owing to the social expectation that procreation should occur only within the institution of marriage (Mikaere 1994, 135-6). Furthermore, illegitimacy revealed a "fallen" or morally weak woman who had failed to rebuke the advances of a man who was not her husband, with little regard for the resulting "bastard" child[8] (Else 1991, 7). Although some submitted their children to institutional or foster care, many were unable to because they were required, and could not afford to make maintenance payments to the State for the care of their child (Else 1991, 23).

These early arrangements for legal adoption did not impact immediately or directly on practices of whāngai. There was a gradual encroachment, beginning with the Native Land Claims and Adjustment and Amendment Act 1901, which required whāngai placements to be registered with the Native Land Court (McRae and Nikora 2006, 1). The Native Land Act 1909 extended this by legislating that Māori must legally adopt through the Native Land Court in order to create a legal relationship between non-birth parents and children; at this time whāngai ceased to be recognised in law, and was effectively prohibited (Mikaere 1994, 137). Disparaging Pākehā attitudes toward whāngai were reported in a 1933 report on "Māori hygiene" from the Medical Officer of Health, Wellington. The report referred to the practice of whāngai as "most unfortunate", and used examples of children being brought up in conditions of disease, ignorance and poverty to justify this claim (Williams 2001, 238). Māori continued to whāngai children outside of the prescribed legal mechanisms, but numbers of adoption applications to the (renamed) Māori Land Court increased in the 1940s (Else 1991, 180).

A number of developments in the late 1940s and early 1950s further impacted on the practice of whāngai by prompting the transition to "full adoption – the complete assimilation of the adopted child as a legitimate child of the adoptive parents" (O'Shaughnessy 1994, 76). Following the Second World War and due to the resulting social upheaval (including an increase in ex-nuptial children), there

[8] An illegitimate child, tainted on account of being outside the moral order of society, was labelled a bastard (Lifton 1976, 2). This meaning originated in 12th century Europe. English law defines a bastard as someone born out of wedlock, and "ill begotten" (Blake 2013, 5).

was worldwide concern regarding social wellbeing and the stability of the family unit. The wellbeing of children, including adopted children, became a high priority for many Western governments (Carp 2009, 30).

British psychiatrist John Bowlby published compelling clinical evidence of the adverse effects of maternal deprivation on infants' wellbeing, proposing that an affectionate and continuous relationship with a mother was necessary for healthy psychological and emotional development. Accordingly, Bowlby recommended that children should be adopted as early as possible, ideally within the first two months following birth (Carp 2009, 22). O'Shaughnessy (1994, 86) argued that Bowlby and Talcott Parsons' work served to justify the formation of the nuclear family where the father was the breadwinner and the mother the stay-at-home carer. In this way, the optimal environment rather than genetics shaped a child's character, personality and achievement. It was claimed that through adoption children could be 'saved' from the effects of economic, maternal, cultural or psychological deprivation.

This was also the era of behaviourism, which argued against the possibility of 'natural' or instinctual knowledge, inherited capacities, talents, temperaments, mental constitution or behavioural characteristics (Shaffer 2009, 11). Applied to child rearing, infants were perceived as 'unmoulded clay' to be shaped by behavioural conditioning. This notion borrows from the *tabula rasa* or blank slate proposition of John Locke, which holds that mind and character development is a consequence of experience rather than any innate ideas or properties (Hayes 1995, 19).

Institutions involved in caring for unmarried mothers in the 1940s began to promote adoption as the most appropriate option, emphasising that this would allow mothers to return to a productive life (Else 1991, 24). Keeping an illegitimate child was now framed as "selfish" because it unnecessarily inflicted enduring poverty and stigma upon the child. Subsequently, single mothers were strongly dissuaded against keeping a child by social workers and institutions (Else 1991, 27). Concerns for child welfare, developmental research that supported a "familial ideology", and rehabilitation, rescue and/or redemption narratives (O'Shaughnessy 1994, 86) culminated in the belief that only a "complete break" would enable the benefits of the adoptive environment to be realised in full (Griffith 1997a, 9; Griffith 1997b, 46). This heralded significant changes to legal adoption, in Aotearoa New Zealand in the form of the Adoption Act 1955.

An interdepartmental committee was convened in 1952 to make recommendations for a new adoption bill. The committee was composed of representatives from the Child Welfare Division and the Ministry of Justice, as well as two Department of Māori Affairs representatives (Else 1991, 180). It was noted that Jock McEwen from Māori Affairs expressed his reservations about the implications of responsibility for children being shared across kin and family networks, including the potential for

child neglect and delinquency as a result of children being without legal status (Dalley 1998, 226). The committee goal was to see customary adoption replaced by legal adoption (Anderson 1967, 98), although some concessions were made. At the Department of Māori Affairs representatives' insistence, the committee recommended that Māori applicants would be able to legally adopt Māori children through the more informal and open Māori Land Court, assisted by Māori welfare officers (Hill 2009, 35). This was a concession made for whāngai adoptions, but all other adoptions of Māori children (i.e. by non-Māori) would be heard in the Magistrate's Court (Haenga-Collins 2017, 56).

Closed stranger adoption in New Zealand

The Adoption Act 1955 established "complete break" or "closed stranger" adoption, based on the assumption that a full and final separation of birth mother and child was the best option for all involved (Weaver 1999, 16). Secrecy was a central feature of the Act, ensured in several ways. Firstly, birth parents were able to consent to the adoption without knowing the identity of the prospective adoptive parents (section 7(6)[9]). Secondly, once the child was adopted the birth record was sealed and a new birth certificate was issued, upon which only the details of the adoptive parents were shown. Lastly, only registrars, marriage celebrants or social workers were able to inspect the adoption records, for the purpose of investigating "forbidden degrees of relationship under the Marriage Act 1955" (section 23(2) and (2A)) (New Zealand Law Commission 1999, 16; Parliamentary Counsel Office 2017).

Under section 16 the effects of the adoption order were stated as such (emphases added):

(2) Upon an adoption order being made…

a) the adopted child shall be deemed to *become the child* of the adoptive parent, and the adoptive parent shall be deemed to become the parent of the child, *as if the child had been born to* that parent in lawful wedlock…

b) the adopted child shall be deemed to *cease to be the child* of his existing parents (whether his natural parents or his adoptive parents under any previous adoption), and the existing parents of the adopted child shall be deemed to cease to be his parents…

f) the adopted child shall acquire the domicile of his adoptive parent or adoptive parents, and the child's domicile shall thereafter be determined *as if the child had been born in* lawful wedlock to the said parent or parents…" (Parliamentary Counsel Office 2017, 18-19)

[9] Although this clause did not require that birth parents *not* know the adopting couple, it was often the practice of social workers and lawyers to prevent this and conversely, adopting couples having any knowledge of birth parents (Else 1991, 104-105). Open adoption is possible on the basis that "the law does not legislate against a person or parties making contact when they are willing to do so" (Iwanek 1994, 283).

The legal status of the adoptee and adoptive family relationships was reinforced via the creation of a "legal fiction" – an assertion that is accepted as true for legal purposes, even though it may be untrue or unproven (Stevenson 2015, n.p; Johnstone 1985, 19). In the process of seeking to replicate a "natural relation" via legal means (Johnstone 1985, 19), the Act went significantly beyond transferring parental rights, powers and responsibilities from one set of parents to another. Birth relationships were legally erased and new relationships were created in their place. The legal fiction thereafter developed into a "general fiction", giving rise to silence, pretence and denial (Else 1991, 181; Griffith 2000, 23).

The practice of "matching" supported the legal fiction. It was thought that in order for the legal fiction to succeed, the adoptive family needed to resemble a biological or "natural" family as closely as possible. It was hoped that, for the sake of the adopted child and the adoptive parents, an adopted child would fit into their new family, not differing too greatly physically or intellectually (Else 1991, 70). Accordingly, some social workers would record physical characteristics of the birth mother and birth father (colouring, height, weight) to infer the child's future appearance, and occupations and educational attainment within the birth mother's family to gauge "intelligence". The adopting couples would then be asked about their preferences, in order for social workers to try to match to an available baby (Else 1991, 73).

Adopting couples' stated preferences for a child included sex and often race/ethnicity; girls were generally in higher demand than boys, although it is not documented why. Placing Māori or 'part-Māori' children was noted to be difficult due to predominantly Pākehā adopting couples' reservations about adopting a Māori child (discussed further in the next section). As Else (1991, 73) notes, the treatment of race as simply "colouring" meant that a visibly Māori baby could be declined as a clear violation of the matching principle, rather than racial prejudice. "Matching for marginality" then came into effect; this was the practice of matching for difference, i.e. placement of "different" children with adopting couples who were also 'different' or deviated from the norm in some way, or who expressed willingness to accept a 'different' child (Else 1991, 80-81). Between 1955 and 1985, 80,031[10] children were legally adopted (Statistics New Zealand 1956-1988). It has been estimated that some 45,000 of these were closed stranger adoptions (Haenga-Collins and Gibbs 2015, 62).[11] Adoption numbers

[10] Figures collected by Griffith (1997a) amount to a total of 80,954 adoptions between 1955 and 1985, with variation from New Zealand Yearbook figures provided in the years 1977-1985. Griffith draws on additional sources, including Social Welfare data, and notes that adoption figures were sometimes adjusted after their initial reporting. I have chosen to report the slightly more conservative NZ Yearbook figures here, for consistency and because I am unable to account for or explain fully the different adoption order totals reported by Griffith (1997a, 390-1).

[11] There were a total of 41,476 adoptions to strangers between 1955 and 1979, excluding those adoptions for which there was no known stranger/non-stranger adopter data (8435), consisting mainly of adoptions not processed by the Social Welfare Department, highly likely to be adoptions to non-strangers. (Griffith 1981, Table No. 5A, A5). On this basis, Griffith adds the adoptions for which there is no adopter data to the 'non-stranger' total from Table No. 5A, resulting in an

peaked in the years 1968-1971, with more than 6% of children born placed for adoption, the highest number of domestic adoptions per capital in the Western world (Else 1991, xii; Iwanek 1997, 67). In those peak years, approximately 70% of adoptions of children were to strangers, a steady decline from 77.9% in 1962 (Griffith 1981, Table No. 5A, A5).

The adoption of Māori children

Reflecting the variability of adoption data and ethnicity recording in this period, the numbers of Māori children adopted is not known. Firstly, the definitions of Māori that have informed official statistic collection have changed over time, impacting on who is counted as Māori. For much of the period, blood racialisation or "degree of Māori blood" prevailed, and tabulations ranged from Māori full-bloods through to one-eighth Māori and seven-eighths European (Kukutai 2011, 37). The resulting fractions of "Māoriness" were then subject to the definitions of Māori race and ethnic origin specified in legislation, which deemed a Māori to be one-half or more Māori blood. There is evidence that Māori did not identify in the way that officials intended, providing only an approximation of blood quantum or an 'overestimation' aligned with their cultural identification (Kukutai 2011, 39). Nonetheless, it was not until the Māori Affairs Amendment Act 1974 removed blood requirements from all statutory definitions that *all* persons of Māori descent, irrespective of quantum, could be 'officially' classified as Māori (Kukutai 2011, 40).

Secondly, adoption processing and reporting systems limited the identification of adoptions involving Māori. "Māori adoption" figures were published between 1951 and 1961, but were only those adoption orders involving a Māori child and at least one Māori adopting parent, granted by the Māori Land Court.[12] These legal adoptions were often assisted by Māori welfare officers, who would become involved where the birth and adoptive parents were either acquainted or related, and were seeking to legalise a pre-agreed arrangement. Māori welfare officers generally attempted to maintain openness and keep children within their kin group (Mikaere 1994, 139). Māori mothers were much less likely to make their children available for legal adoption by strangers (O'Neill, Hudson, Boven, O'Connell and Donnell 1976, 243) or be in contact with Child Welfare, perhaps owing to the Māori aversion to placing a child in an unknown family (Else 1991, 187).

Adoptions involving a Māori child and non-Māori adopting parents, heard in the Magistrates' Court, were not included in the Māori adoption figures. These were more likely to be facilitated by

estimated lower percentage of stranger adoptions in Table No. 5B (A5). Taking into account the declining percentage of adoptions by strangers post-1979, an estimate of 33% between 1980 and 1985 yields an estimated total of 45,000.

[12] In the New Zealand Yearbooks, Māori customary adoption orders ranged from 147 in 1951 to 407 in 1961, a total of 2681 compared to a total of 17,352 legal adoptions (15.45%). In theory all of these adoptions involved a child and at least one applicant of half or more Maori descent; most were adoptions by kin (Else 1991, 184).

child welfare officers, and were more likely to occur with either Māori women who were unmarried and living away from their tribal area and kin networks, or more usually, Pākehā women who were unmarried and had become pregnant to Māori men (Haenga-Collins 2017, 59, 72-3; Else 2019, 10, 16). There are accounts of coercion by child welfare officers; instructing young Māori women to withhold their pregnancy from family members in order that the closed stranger adoption could proceed (Else 1991, 188), or arguing strongly that it was in the child's interests to be brought up by a stable married couple who could provide financial security. In these instances, the child would avoid the shame of illegitimacy (Mikaere 1994, 139). There were other cases where children of Māori birth fathers were adopted without the father's knowledge, or even against whānau requests that they adopt the child (Mikaere 1994, 139). In a society in which the stigma of illegitimacy loomed large, and negative and prejudicial attitudes about Māori abounded, the alternative to adoption was unpalatable for many Pākehā families – i.e. for their daughter to marry the Māori father prior to the birth (Haenga-Collins 2017, 72).

For the child of a "mixed race" union, their Māori ethnicity was not always recorded, or it may have been recorded incorrectly. Out of concerns for her child's 'adoptability', a mother may have chosen not to identify her child as Māori, or a Pākehā mother may not have known the "degree of Māori blood" (Else 1991, 79; Kirby 1994, 23-4). Furthermore, what was officially recorded, subject to the regulations of the time, may have seen a child of Māori descent but below the "half-caste" margin, categorised as non-Māori (see Appendix XI for an example of this). Tribal affiliations were very rarely recorded, and almost never by Pākehā social workers. The focus was on the extent to which "Māoriness" was apparent in the child's appearance, rather than for the purposes of Māori adoptees' cultural knowledge or identification (Else 2011, 2; Else 1991, 186). Due to the limited number of Māori adopting parents (Labrum 2002, 177; Else 1991, 187), blood quantum was used by some social workers to prioritise which Māori children would be matched with which parents: "if a child had any degree of Māori above a quarter, we tried to look for Māori applicants...Where the children had only a small degree of Māori, we didn't think much about placing them with Europeans" (Social worker cited in Else 1991, 187).

From 1962, when the Magistrates' Courts began dealing with all adoption applications following the Adoption Amendment Act, only the annual total of orders was reported in publicly available figures (Else 1991, 184). However, 3,168 Māori adoptions recorded by registrars between 1962 and 1972 were reported in a 1973 Government white paper (NZ Government 1973, 74). New Zealand Yearbooks recorded a further 2,944 adoptions handled by Māori welfare officers between 1973 and 1981, most likely adoptions of Māori children. The total of 8,793 recorded Māori adoptions between 1951 and 1981 (11.66% of all legal adoptions) excludes a number of children of Māori descent

who were not recorded as such for the reasons described above. Therefore this figure is likely a significant underestimate.

For Māori, central concerns relating to formal adoption included the lack of acknowledgement of customary adoption practices and the reinforcement of secrecy in Western adoption practices, which were perceived as detrimental to a sense of self and belonging, and hapū membership (Pitama 1997, 75). Western legal adoption based on assumptions that a child's lineage could be erased and birth/parental rights traded was a foreign concept to Māori. This denied the extended family its whānau rights and a child knowledge of, and connection to, their whakapapa (Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare 1988, 75-6). Mead (1994, 91-2) described some personal observations of Māori adoptees re-entering the Māori world as adults, as "traumatic, painful, difficult and terrible to witness" due to their alienation from Māori culture and whānau and their upbringing by Pākehā as Pākehā. Kirby (1994, 24) made similar observations of these "painful returning[s] to the tribe and whānau" by adopted children.

Māori action against the Treaty of Waitangi breaches via adoption

At least three claims have been lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal[13] by Māori, which allege that the Adoption Act 1955 breaches the Crown's obligation to Māori as Treaty partner. WAI 160[14] and WAI 286[15] were lodged in 1990 and 1992 respectively (Masters 1999, 36-46), and Treaty Claim #1656[16] was lodged in 2009; each ground their claims in the breach of Article 2 specifically, which guaranteed Māori *tino rangatiratanga*, or sovereignty over their *taonga* ((treasures) Dhyrberg 2001, 12). Taonga is read as including children, given that they are highly valued members and descendants of whānau, hapū and iwi (Dhyrberg 2001, 3). It was argued that exercising tino rangatiratanga entails having the right to determine how children are cared for.

Treaty of Waitangi Claim #1656 is concerned with the disadvantage, trauma and serious effects arising from the Adoption Act 1955 (sections 3 and 7) and 1862 Native Lands Act (sections 18 and 19), for Māori who were made wards of the state,[17] adopted or fostered through the welfare system. Loss of iwi, hapū and whānau, and identity are central to this claim. Among the remedies sought,

[13] The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 to hear claims by Māori relating to Crown breaches of Treaty of Waitangi guarantees. Two versions of the Treaty apply here; an English text and a Māori text. Each are comprised of a preamble and three articles, although they differ in several important respects.
[14] Reihana, T.C. (Date registered: 24 August 1990). WAI 160: Guardianship Act claim. The Waitangi Tribunal, NZ.
[15] Tait-Jones, D.E.B. (Date registered: 22 May 1992). WAI 286: Adoption of Children claim. The Waitangi Tribunal, NZ.
[16] Beckett, K. (Date received: 18 February 2009). WAI 1656: Adoption, Fostering and Wards of the State claim.
[17] A state ward is a child for whom the state assumed responsibility for their care, ostensibly for their protection. However, as Stanley (2016) reports, children in this situation were first removed from their families, and then spent years in community and institutional care, arguably in worse circumstances. Many were subject to horrific abuse and neglect, which is now the focus of a Government inquiry: The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

claimants asked for a public inquiry to hear the evidence of those affected, a formal apology, compensation, and an open national register for adopted Māori (Ludbrook and Marks 2009, 13-14). These claims are yet to be progressed or investigated by the Tribunal. While formal state apologies in Australia and Canada for the forced removal and institutionalisation of indigenous children have provided an opportunity to discuss child removal and past adoption practices (Haenga-Collins 2017, 7), there has been no such impetus in Aotearoa New Zealand (Blake 2013, 22-3).

Further research into past adoption practices as they impacted upon Māori, in the interests of social justice and human rights is necessary to highlight what can be learnt and what might be applied to contemporary childcare issues such as inter-country adoption and reproductive technologies (Else 1991, 203). Bringing the stories and voices of Māori adoptees to the fore enables these previously marginalised perspectives to be heard, and also the informative, generative and decolonial potential of Māori adoptionality to be realised.

Identity as paradigmatic construct

As noted in the prologue, a central focus in extant research on Māori adoptees has been that of identity. This is also the case for adoptees in general (Grotevant 1997, 7; Triseliotis 2000, 8). It is a well-worn narrative that adoptees are compromised in terms of their self-understanding and identity due to their lack of knowledge of, and access to, biological families. Identity as a form of self-knowledge is also accorded considerable importance in te ao Māori, particularly in relation to the concept of whakapapa (genealogy) (Mead 1994, 87, 92-3). However, scholarly discussions in the identity studies field have moved beyond such widely held notions, raising the question of where this leaves the identity experiences of everyday people, if not reflected in contemporary theorising? Conversely, what does it mean for contemporary theorising that some of these theoretical ideas may not be reflected in how everyday people talk about or experience their identities? In the course of exploring Māori adoptee experiences and identities (research question #1), this research aims to *say something* about identity itself (research question #2). The following section provides a brief overview of the construct of identity within the social science field, before arriving at a fitting theory to frame this inquiry.

The importance of identity

Identity is vital to our understanding and experience of the world (Splitter 2015, 1). All things have an identity, in terms of a name or description, and what this denotes in terms of their relationships with other things. We learn to operate in the world by knowing what things are, and their similarities or

differences to other things (Splitter 2015, 1), which is all part of the ubiquitous human process of categorisation (Hammack 2014, 11).

The notion of identity as "names and looks" (Wetherell 2010, 3) extends beyond the world of objects to the domain of people. Here, identity assumes additional importance as a conceptual and social-relational tool (Hammack 2014, 11-2). The determination of sameness (i.e. resemblance), difference and relation/ship is more complex and can have profound and material consequences for individuals and groups (Woodward 1997b, 12). Identities serve as sources of meaning and belonging, confer particular rights and statuses, or conversely, exclude individuals and groups from particular benefits or opportunities (Castells 2009, 6-7). As well as constituting representations of self and position within the social hierarchy, identities entail personal commitments. Our choices to identify and make particular identity claims are informed by personal goals, values and beliefs (Schwartz, Luyckx and Crocetti 2014, 540).

Identity as it is described above relates to its status as a "category of practice"; that is, a category of everyday social experience employed by social actors (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4). Several dimensions are apparent. *Sameness–difference* refers to the extent to which identity entails identification with, as well as difference from, someone or something else. Sameness, continuity or persistence over time is an attribute of personal identity, but changes may also be attributed to human development as well as contextual factors (*stability–change*, *enduring–situational*). *Structure–agency* refers to the extent to which identity is determined by social structures such as family, marriage, economy and other major institutions, compared with an individual exercising autonomy or making choices about how to identify. Furthermore, identities can say something about the individual and form part of individuals' "personal projects of self" (Wetherell 2010, 6), and individual qualities can constitute commonalities among members of a group or social category (*personal– social*). Personal or social group qualities can relate to assigned or involuntary aspects of identity, as well as those self-identified aspects (*control – constraint*). 'Looks' implicate the significance of appearance and the body in the assignment or choice of identities, as opposed to elements of identity unrelated to physical or material form (*substance–incorporeality*). The body suggests an identity that is somewhat biologically determined but the social meanings and identities associated with that body may be constructed outside the person, negotiated in social interactions and through language (*biologically determined–socially constructed*).

These dimensions also feature in theorising about identity as a "category of analysis" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4). Particular paradigms are associated with different poles of those dimensions. A positivist paradigm tends to conceptualise identity as a direct reflection of and determined by an objective, material reality – coherent, certain, stable and comprised of fixed 'essences'. Conversely, a

post-modernist paradigm challenges notions of a singular reality, 'truth' or essential foundation. From this perspective, identities are temporary attachments to subject positions constructed by discursive practices, marked by multiplicity, contradiction and fluidity (Hall 1996, 6).

The determinism and naïve realism associated with positivist notions of identity are as equally problematic as the anti-foundationalism and 'excessive' relativism of postmodern and strongly social constructionist notions. Both extremes (*essentialism-anti-essentialism*) have significant consequences for identity: rendering it as either a grounded but essentialist, internally homogeneous property, or as arbitrary and illusory, in need of grounding (Moya 2000, 3; Marotta and Muraca 2017, 237).

These polarised conceptions construct adoptee identity as having a "doomed quality" (Carsten 2004, 149) – deficient or lacking due to reliance on 'fictive', non-biological foundations, or an ultimately futile project based on meaningless social categorisations. Needless to say, neither of these conceptions reflect dominant discourses *or* adoptees' lived experiences.

In order that identity maintains some utility and currency as a construct, and indeed some relationship to 'everyday people's' experiences (rather than experience-distant: Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 4), the need for theory that can account for a 'middle ground' has been asserted (Vignoles, Schwartz and Luyckx 2011, 11). As such, over the past 25 years, writers located in ethnic, minority and cross-cultural studies have developed a postpositivist realist theory of identity. With an explicit reclamation agenda, realist identity proponents offer a mediated approach to experience and knowledge, subjectivity and objectivity (Alcoff 2010, 144).

Post-positivist realist accounts of identity

Post-positivism encompasses a variety of 'realisms',[18] focused around the existence of an objective reality that *can* be known, if not in a complete and unmediated way. By giving due emphasis to the 'real' – material, social, economic as well as discursive – conditions in which groups live and are located, space is made for personal, collective and critical political agency (Sanchez 2006, 31-2; Gilpin 2006, 10). From this position, identities are both constructed and real, mediated through cognitive and social processes interconnected with specific historical conditions and social structures, relational but simultaneously grounded and embodied (Gilpin 2006, 10; Sanchez 2006, 34).

Where reality is conceptualised as multiple and stratified layers ranging from the natural and material through to the social and discursive, human experience constitutes the 'actual' or 'empirical' (Fleetwood 2014, 193, 204). Reality can only be known through experience, including perceptions,

[18] Including critical realism (see theoretical framework in Chapter Five), constructivist realism and social realism (for example, Archer 2000)

emotional reactions and embodiment, inevitably coloured by the self, social identities, traditions and cultures (Alcoff 2010, 151). Experience is thereby comprised of subjective as well as objective elements; a person's lived sense of self *and* their awareness of how they are identified by others. Rather than being immediate or self-evident, experience is mediated and ambiguous. Recognising that there are constraints on what people can know about themselves and the world through experience, realists nonetheless see self-knowledge as a potential form of insight (Alcoff 2010, 150), and reliable knowledge, that is, knowledge with practical utility or linked to clear and distinct ideas, as attainable (Alcoff 2010, 146; Moya 2000, 12).

As "rough correlates" of experience, identities are "revisable, fallible constructions" that support individuals to make sense of historical events and personal experiences (Alcoff 2010, 159). On this basis Mohanty (1993, 55) and thereafter Alcoff (2010, 159), argue for the value of identities as explanatory theories with potential for testing conceptions of social reality, not as "fundamental metaphysical posits." Likewise, Moya (2000, 9-10) promotes the evaluation and enhanced understanding of identities as a first step in pursuing social change; transforming and dismantling identities associated with social conflict, as well as acknowledging cultural identities that enable and engender attachment and feeling.

Usefully, post-positivist realism conceives of identity as *embedded within and emergent from* self, personhood, positioning, subjectivity and positionality (Sanchez 2006, 35-40). Accounts of both personal and social identities, agents and actors are possible (Archer 2000, 257). Self is deemed to be the continuous sense of being one and the same subject, a reflexive self-consciousness emergent from consciousness. Personhood emerges from the sense of self and its embodied engagement with the world, and thereby, personal identity, one's strict identity as a particular person (Archer 2000, 7, 10, 190). One's positioning, or location within a given social reality is determined by structural forces, but also subject to discourse, which thereby influence one's positionality, one's imagined relation or standpoint relative to that positioning. The interconnection between positioning and positionality determine one's lived experience, how one lives one's actual and perceived situation in the world (Sanchez 2006, 35-40). Social selves such as agent and actor emerge from the interface of structure and agency, distinguishable by their intention (Archer 2000, 254, 258). Where everyone is an involuntary agent by virtue of occupying a particular social position, actors acquire social identities through investing in and personifying chosen roles (Archer 2000, 261). Such an identity concept is therefore able to draw upon notions from psychological and sociological theories, which have delivered important insights in extant identity research (some of these theories as they relate to adoptive identity are discussed in Chapter Three). As parts of the post-positivist realist identity 'whole', the elements of positioning, positionality and subjectivity will be utilised in Chapter Two to

demonstrate the various connections between discourses and practices of adoption and Māori adoptee identities. An overview of the way in which identity and adoption are woven together in the remainder of this thesis is outlined next.

The thesis narrative

The purpose of these introductory sections has been two-fold. The prologue outlined the personal dimensions of adoption in relation to my situatedness as an insider researcher and subject. Chapter One has provided some historical groundwork to adoption practices in Aotearoa New Zealand in order to present the movement to closed stranger adoption during the 20th century and its bearing on Māori children. This has demonstrated how adoption was both a social and colonial project. The paradigmatic situatedness of identity has also been outlined, in order to highlight the implications for Māori adoptee identities, and the value of a post-positivist realist lens for framing the literature review and data analysis. The following three chapters continue to narrate the theoretical and literature-based foundations for this research.

Chapters Two, Three and Four explore adoption and identity as they intersect, beginning with an analysis of the discourses at work in closed adoption, and how those discourses feature in the lives of adoptees, experientially and narratively. Chapter Three provides an overview of what is known or theorised regarding adoptive identities, across the paradigmatic continuum. The focus of Chapter Four is to explore in further depth some of the issues involved in the formation of transracial, indigenous and Māori adoptee identities.

Chapters Five and Six present the theoretical frameworks, methodologies and approaches taken to collecting and analysing data from Māori adoptee experiences/narratives, and the associated rationale. Chapter Five opens with discussion of the respective contributions and synergies of critical realism and kaupapa Māori, as the study's theoretical underpinnings. The philosophy and application of Ricoeurian (narrative) hermeneutic phenomenology is also outlined, for its utility in deriving meanings associated with "being-adopted-and-Māori". Processes involved in recruiting participants, ensuring ethical and reflexive rigour are also detailed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven introduces briefly the structure of the findings chapters that follow. Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten present the findings from interviews with Māori adoptees, within a framework of "being, becoming and emerging", as aligned with Māori creation narratives. Māori adoptee experiences and narratives (research question 1) are discussed in three parts spanning the life course. Chapter Eight explores participants' experiences of growing up adopted-and-Māori, culminating in a post-positivist realist account of emotion and identity in discursive and developmental contexts.

Chapter Nine presents participants' experiences of searching for and making contact with birth whānau, and Chapter Ten focuses on their experiences beyond their adoptive and birth families, identifying and learning to "be Māori", and establishing families of their own. Concepts from the literature review identified in Chapters Two, Three and Four are drawn on throughout these chapters, to contextualise and develop the emerging themes.

The final chapter, Chapter Eleven, summarises the research findings and deepens the analysis with respect to identity (research question 2). The chapter opens with discussion of the discursive and ontological dimensions of Māori adoptees' subjectivities and identity, followed by an account of the enduring, dynamic and narrative nature of the identity work involved. The unique contributions that 'doubly-colonised' Māori adoptee identities offer to understandings of Māori identity, are also presented. Finally, consideration is given to the role of research design and methodological decisions in shaping key findings, as well as possibilities for future and further research.

Chapter Two:
Constructing Adoption & Its Subjects

The meaning and representation of adoption in wider society is important to consider, in order to understand the implications of adoption for the identities of adoptees. As with any social practice or institution, adoption entails particular meanings relative to time, place and culture, which are produced and exchanged through language. Beyond the use of signs – words and images – to communicate and express ideas, to *say* something, *discourse* extends to the effects of meaning; the knowledge, objects, subjects and power relations that are constructed and maintained through language (Hall 1997a, 29, 15). Discourses about adoption encompass values, beliefs, moral orientations and attitudes (Souto-Manning 2014, 159), which also play a part in constructing and governing adopted subjects – "their subjectivities and associated identities, their relations, and the field in which they exist" (Purvis and Hunt 1993, 474). Becoming an adopted subject involves being positioned in a particular social location that then shapes experience. Experience in turn is shaped by the subject's own thinking and acting (Prins 2006, 280; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002, 14). Macro-level discourses find their way into everyday and conversational narratives and individuals' accounts of their experiences and themselves, which combine their particular concerns with institutional discourses (Souto-Manning 2014, 161). Adoptee identities are both embedded and emergent, structural and agential – unfolding from positioning in discourse but also constructed in the process of narration, drawing on available discursive resources, social narratives and cultural meaning systems (Souto-Manning 2014, 162; Prins 2006, 281; Patton 2000, 5, 11).

In the following section I outline four key 'framings' that outline how closed adoption and its subjects have been talked about and understood in relation to sociocultural norms and prevailing discourses of family, citizenship and race.[19] The first three framings correspond to the period in which closed adoption was practiced, and reflect the dominant discourses and social values that closed adoption reproduced. The last 'framing' stands apart as a critical construction, contesting dominant discourses. These discursive constructions contribute to the social positioning of Māori adoptees, and

[19] Phillips and Jorgenson (2002, 7) define "particular ways of talking about and understanding adoption" as discourses.

shape and influence adoptee experiences and narratives. The literature on adoption and adoptee narratives is outlined in the second part of the chapter.

Adoption as stigmatised family-building

In the socio-historical-legal background of modern adoption laid out in Chapter One, there are 'hints' at the paradigms and discourses underlying adoption in differing contexts and time periods. Adoption was generally practised to ensure the continuity of the family (Iwanek 1997, 62), but always in a way that supported or aligned with social conventions and norms. The closed stranger form of adoption that developed in mid-20th century Western countries reflects particular norms and values: for example, individualism, a 'nuclear' family unit shaped by Judeo-Christian gender and sexual norms, and notions of possession, ownership and materialism (Benet 1976, 79). Within this, the adoptive family is constructed according to discourses of 'the law of order' rather than 'nature' or procreation as per the prevailing conjugal family form comprised of a mother, father and their biological children (Schneider 1980, 110).

This reflects a fundamental ontological distinction – nature is the "undifferentiated foundation" upon which culture is applied, and culture is what distinguishes and differentiates humans from other animals (Vaisman 2013, 106). This opposition emerged with the advent of modernism (19th and early 20th centuries), and although efforts have been made to do away with the nature/culture dichotomy, Vaisman argues that most writers have ended up endorsing one of two positions, both predicated on the distinction between nature and culture: either nature is shaping culture (biological determinism) or culture imposes meaning on nature (cultural determinism). According to Frank (2003, 69), it is this conceptual circularity that maintains the enduring dichotomy – "nature is used to justify culture, the prevailing order, while at the same time, the prevailing order, culture, is mapped onto this *reified* entity, *things-in-themselves*, called nature" (emphases added).

The idea that nature pre-exists and exists independently of humans sees it elevated above culture, and as Schneider (1980, 110) notes, a higher order. Thus, "things-in-themselves" are in a raw, unmediated, pure or natural form, and what is 'natural' becomes primary, 'real' and authentic. The perception of nature as "value neutral", free of pre-existing values and interests, not subject to human preconceptions, holds particular appeal, promising the discovery of "universal and unchanging truths" and a universal natural order (O'Brien 1999, 43). The boundaries of these 'natural' distinctions and categories are observed and maintained through our cultural order, in the shape of norms (and laws) regulating relationships and activities, including kinship and identities.

In western society, this bionormative[20] categorisation/order has evolved into an ideology that the only 'real' relation is a blood relation (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 85). In a context of hegemonic biological kinship, the only way in which adoptive relations could achieve any level of legitimacy was via i) the extinction of pre-existing biological relations between child and biological parents, followed by ii) the substitution with legally authorised 'as if biological' adoptive relations. However, there were a number of effects: adoptive relations become "both legitimate and fraudulent", legally sanctioned but seen as "synthetic or second-hand" (McLeod 2015, 15), a "second or unnatural choice" (Benet 1976, 15; Beauchesne 1997, 6). Wegar (1998, 41) goes further to argue that alternative kinship and family forms produced by adoption may even be viewed as "threats to the social fabric…in some ways defective, problematic and pathogenic". This perception may be due in part to the social stigma associated with the illegitimacy of many adoptees and the circumstances that had produced them. Together with the stigma of infertility for many adopting parents, it has shaped adoption as a deviant practice (Haimes and Timms 1985, 77; Wegar 2000, 364).

With the easing of social norms regarding illegitimacy (O'Neill et al. 1976, 398), it might be expected that the stigma of adoption has also dissipated. This may be true to some extent: in her research of the cultural meanings associated with adoption in the United States, Clark-Miller (2005) found that opinions about adoption practice were generally favourable. However, she also found enduring differentiation and stereotyping of adoptive parents and children, with the label and identity 'adopted' connoting lower status and power. Adopted children were perceived more negatively than non-adopted children, characterised as having more behavioural problems and possessing more negative traits – deemed suspicious, inhibited, aloof, defensive and compulsive compared with "playful" non-adopted children (93, 95, 97-9, 102-3). For Clark-Miller (2005, 129), this presents a critical challenge to the "acknowledgement of difference"[21] advice and practice in adoption currently; if open acknowledgement is insufficient to achieve socio-cultural change, members of the adoption triad who declare their adoptive status face ongoing stigma and discrimination.

[20] There are a number of terms relating to the privileging of biology and nature over 'culture', of which bionormative is one. Others include biocentrism, biogenetic primacy, biological essentialism and biological hegemony.

[21] "Acknowledgement-of-difference" and "rejection-of-difference" were two differing adoptive parent positions identified by Kirk (1964: 59-74) in his seminal research. Kirk found that these two positions represented contrasting ways that parents dealt with their "role handicap" as stigmatised adoptive parents. "Rejection-of-difference", akin to repressing or forgetting adoptive differences (63) was linked to more negative outcomes for both parents and children, whereas "acknowledgement-of-difference" is now recognised as best practice.

Adoption as pathology

Between the 1920s and 1960s, illegitimacy was a pathology that needed to be fixed. Adoption was a means of circumventing the transmission of low moral character and vices from unmarried parents to child ('bad blood/heredity). The adoptee, pathologised as illegitimate due to their sinful origins could be "recuperated" through adoption (Sales 2012, 33). Righting the wrong of illegitimacy and the fear of moral deficit was intensified with the emergence of discourses around child psychology and mothering post-World War II, in the work of John Bowlby and others (Howell 2007, 88-9, 94). The bond between adoptive mother and adopted child was considered to be of supreme importance, and adoption practices were altered so that infants were placed as early as possible with adoptive mothers. This also involved severing contact with the biological mother (Sales 2012, 62).

A healthy, ideal, or successful adoption was one in which an adoptee did not enquire about their origins or birth family. This was so important that prospective adopters were advised as such via publication, for example: "it is rare for a happily adopted child to wish to look up his adoption records and even more rare for him to try to find his first parents. If they do it usually means that something has gone wrong in their home and they are searching for a satisfaction that they have not yet found. An intense and long-continued interest in his original parents is a sign that all is not well and the child may need professional help" (Rowe 1959, 147 quoted in Else 1991, 145).

This thinking endured into the 1960s and 1970s, with dysfunction in the adoptive family perceived as the motivating factor for adoptee searching in the work of Triseliotis (1973), and Sorosky, Baran and Pannor (1975). Although the findings of this research ultimately supported adoptees' access to birth information, positioning adoptees as "tracers" or "non-tracers", in deep psychological need and 'not interested' respectively, had the effect of pathologising a common curiosity and what was for some adoptees, a very important process (Haimes and Timms 1985, 75-6).

As knowledge about the developmental and social outcomes of adopted children increased, a myriad of terms for the problems faced by adoptees were formulated, including "genealogical bewilderment" (Sants 1964, 133), "adopted child syndrome" (Kirschner and Nagel 1988, 302-3), "cumulative adoption trauma" (Lifton 2002, 209), and "psychic homelessness" (Hoksbergen 1999, 106-7). Each sought to account for clinical observations of higher rates of psychological and behavioural problems among adoptees, but differ in their attributions as to the root cause: lack of knowledge of and then preoccupation with biological origins; a sense of loss and abandonment culminating in low self-esteem and shallowness of attachment; and lack of belonging. Where Lifton, as an adoptee, perceived adoption itself as pathogenic, others chose instead to see it as part of the adoptee or their adoptive family's maladjustment. This was the individualistic lens of traditional

psychology at work, which ignored the social power relations involved in adoption (Blake 2013, 27). From here arose the construction of "the pathological adoptee".

Adoption as assimilative colonialism

Alongside the production of the adoptee as pathological, the social welfare system in Aotearoa New Zealand oversaw the closed adoption of indigenous (Māori) children to non-indigenous families. The pre-existing form of customary adoption (whāngai) was ignored. Closed stranger adoption was employed (or perhaps deployed) at a point in time when Māori were deemed 'ready' to accept adoption[22]; the path to acceptance having been paved by the legislation and policies that had gone before. The government's emphasis on assimilation in the 1950s and 1960s was in the form of "integration"; this was a more insidious form of settler colonialism, outwardly focused on equality. Superseding rather than reproducing the colonial rule of difference, settler colonialism achieves its goals by discontinuing unequal relationships, and thereby "...[erasing] colonised subjectivities rather than [reproducing] their subordination" (Veracini 2017, 2-3). Arguments against "racial discrimination" on the basis of legal differentiation were used to justify the imposition of closed stranger adoption upon Māori, fully and finally in the extension of the provisions of the 1955 Act to *all* adoptions via the Adoption Amendment Act 1962 (Harris 2007, 162; Hanan 1962, 117).

The 'erasure' of Māori featured in several ways in closed stranger adoption. Firstly, the definition of Māori employed in the Adoption Act 1955 was based on prevailing statistical notions of "half-caste" blood quantum or more. Used within the population census, this ensured that with intermarriage and "racial dilution", Māori would become statistically insignificant and theoretically cease to exist, subsumed within the European ethnic category (Love 2002, 8). Applied within the Adoption Act 1955, this definition was used to support the adoption of Māori children of less than "half-caste" blood quantum through the Magistrate's Court, rather than the Māori Land Court where whakapapa and placement with kin were more likely to be considered.

Secondly, the haphazard recording of children's Māori ancestry in adoption files means that ethnicity was rendered invisible in child welfare statistics (aside from anecdote), a barrier to analysis of the impact upon Māori communities, and effectively excluding "the lived realities of Māori from

[22] Whereas in Australia, Canada and the United States, assimilation via indigenous transracial adoption was an explicit policy goal, it was not so in New Zealand (Armitage 1995, 160), rather an implicit part of the 'integration' social policy period. "In implementation of [the Hunn Report in 1960], the Adoption Amendment Bill was introduced in 1962. Hunn in a memorandum to Hanan stated that 'in the circumstances that the Māori attitude to adoption is now more formalised and the customary element of adoption as between relatives is disappearing the way seems to be clear enough for the final step.' This 'final step' included transferring all jurisdiction in respect of Māori adoptions from the Māori Land Court to the Magistrates" (Williams 2001, 239), which decision-makers hoped would bring an end to customary adoption/whāngai.

official discourse" (Love 2002, 13). Finally, the majority of Māori children were adopted by Pākehā families, thus enculturated in the Pākehā world and worldview, without connections, experiences, or understandings[23] to facilitate their identification or orientation as Māori. This removal of children from their cultural communities in numbers constituted a significant loss of human capital, described by some as "legalised cultural genocide" (Bradley 1997, 41). For some Māori adoptees (as with other trans-racial adoptees), being raised as a member of dominant culture while possessing characteristics of 'the racial/cultural other' in a racialised and neo-colonial society has been problematic and dissonance-inducing (see discussion in Chapter Four). In some ways this is an ultimate form of colonisation, in that Māori birth identity and heritage was erased by the legal fiction of being "as if born to" non-Māori adoptive parents.

Adoption as paradox

A more recent construction to emerge relating to adoption focuses on its contradictory discourses and their paradoxical consequences for members of the adoption 'triad'. Discourses around biological kinship and adoptive kinship co-exist, interdependently: adoptive kinship relationships simultaneously dissolve and mimic 'natural' biological kinship relationships via the creation of a legal fiction (*as if born to*), maintained by institutional policies of matching and secrecy (McLeod 2015, 15; Yngvesson 2010, 15). Thus, the adoptive family and their kinship are constructed in a wholly different way to the biological family, but this difference is then *denied*. Adoptive families are then compelled to internalise the contradiction of this discursive negation (O'Shaughnessy 1994, 226). Reported effects upon adoptees include cognitive dissonance and psychological discomfort, and difficulties reconciling conflicting assertions (Delany 2002, 122). Examples cited include being told they were wanted children, 'chosen' and therefore special, but also that they ought to be grateful for being rescued because they had been given away (Beauchesne 1997, 9). For some, there were feelings of shame upon hearing and learning the meanings and personal significance of words such as 'bastard' and illegitimate, but confusion at then being told that they were "the same as everyone else." The contradictions created by the intermittent acknowledgement and then denial of difference were extremely disconcerting for adoptees, impacting on their integration within their adoptive families and their personal and social identities.

[23] Including a colonised conception of self and being that Love (2002, 15, quoting Sampson, 1993) calls a self-contained individualism, in contrast to the ensembled individualism more common in indigenous societies.

Adoption as a marker of social positioning

Adopted children inherit their birth parents' class, race/ethnicity and other characteristics, and the associated positioning. This positioning is an "involuntary placement" (Archer 2000, 264) and is in large part determined by birth circumstances in relation to economic, political and cultural structures (Sanchez 2006, 35). As cited in Chapter One, these social characteristics would be noted in adoption files, and would feature in adoption placement decisions (e.g. matching), and categorisations of children as desirable and/or marketable.

Adoptees undergo a second involuntary placement, into an adoptive family. Adoption was meant to provide children with better life chances and social positioning – moving them from a stigmatised and potentially impoverished upbringing as an illegitimate child of parents of dubious moral character, to more fortunate circumstances in an intact and functional nuclear adoptive family. However, the rationale to this intervention assumed that the child's inherited or 'birth' social positioning was extinguishable, and could be replaced entirely by the social positioning of the adoptive parents. It also assumed that there is no such thing as 'adoptive positioning'.

As discussed above, the adoption of Māori children was constructed as positive for the reasons outlined previously, but also in terms of assimilatory outcomes. In the period in which closed stranger adoption was practised, perceptions of Māori were largely unfavourable, that of inferior, primitive "bludgers" (Houkamau 2010, 182; Bell 2004, 65). The only way to be acceptably Māori was to be detribalised with only a vestigial *Māoritanga* ((Māoriness, Māori culture, practices and beliefs) Hunn 1961, 14-5). In this context, being Māori was likely seen as counter to the interests of the adopted child, and not to be encouraged (Else 1991, 191). However, the existence of a racialised social hierarchy meant that it was unlikely that the race/ethnicity of Māori adoptees would be erased entirely by their adoption into largely Pākehā families.

As the aforementioned discourses allude to, being adopted is also associated with a particular social positioning – that of being different, non-bionormative and therefore inferior, even "pathological". Being adopted is an assigned characteristic that, similarly to Māori race/ethnicity, has been undervalued by society and subject historically to prejudicial attitudes and discrimination (Grotevant 1992, 83-4). However, in a 'colonial turn', the denial of difference refutes any such positioning, thus undermining any claims to this effect. The question of what this positioning means to adoptees is the focus of positionality and subjectivity, which will be explored in following sections.

Living within the paradox: Adoption discourses in everyday life and narratives

Adoption discourses have a presence in adoptees' lives well beyond their initial adoption. They influence how adoption is narrated and discussed in the adoptive family. They also extend to the range of public and private contexts that adoptees inhabit, and inform the positions that adoptees take in regards to their adoption. The "entrance" narratives crafted by adoptive parents, experiences of adoption micro-aggressions, and search-for-origins and reunion narratives generated by adoptees, demonstrate the influence of such discourses, as well as dynamics of discursive reinforcement, enforcement, contestation and resistance in adoptees' lives. These are discussed below. Owing to the limited literature available on Māori adoptees, the following sections have a general focus. However, the similarities of adoption practices and ideology between Aotearoa New Zealand and other Western countries means that the literature therein is likely to be equally relevant to Māori adoptees.

Adoption entrance narratives

"Entrance narratives" are those created by adoptive families and told to adoptees as they are growing up. These narratives are derived from broader social discourses and serve several functions: "kinning" the adopted child or making them into a relative (Howell 2001, 207); legitimising the adoptive family form in a biocentric society (Galvin, Braithwaite and Bylund 2015, 5-6; Blake and Coombes 2016, 53); combatting the potential loss experienced by the adopted child who is without a birth story; establishing the adopted child's place in the family and the world; and teaching children what it means to be adopted and why they were placed for adoption (Kranstuber 2008, 12).

Entrance narratives commonly contain multiple themes. Destiny or fate – the inevitability, rightness but also special-ness of their child's entrance into the family is one. Narratives also often include a theme about the adoptive child being rescued – saving the child from threatening or less than optimal circumstances and being chosen, which emphasises adopted parents' agency in selecting the adoptee, and their being special in that regard (Krusiewicz and Wood 2001, 793-6). The salience and framing of these themes as negative or positive vary between families, and how these are told has implications for adoptees' experiences of themselves.

These narratives "can be extraordinarily important in mending, further rupturing, or otherwise modifying the children's sense of place, history, identity and value" (Krusiewicz and Wood 2001, 786). As noted in the "adoption as paradox" section, while well-meaning, the content of entrance narratives can be confusing and contradictory for adoptees. Furthermore, a lack of personal stories about birth family can contribute to an adopted child's sense of loss (Galvin 2006b, 146). However, in

Kranstuber and Koenig Kellas' (2011) seminal research on the significance of the 'received version' of adoptee origins for adult adoptee narratives and perspectives, the "chosen child" theme was found to be positively correlated with self-esteem and generalised trust (191-2).

Adoption microaggressions

Microaggressions involve the casual degradation of any marginalised group and function to reinforce dominant ideologies and hierarchies (Sue 2010, 5). It should therefore be no surprise that adoptees are the recipients of adoption-specific microaggressions that convey judgements, slights or criticisms based on bionormative discourses (Baden 2016, 6-7). There are several categories (microassaults, microinvalidations and microinsults), which differ in terms of their visibility and action. In some of the research conducted thus far, microinvalidations, verbal or non-verbal communications that exclude, deny, or devalue the thoughts, feelings or experiences of members of the adoption kinship network, are reported to be the most frequently occurring (Garber 2014, 54).

Microinsults and microinvalidations are less obvious; their subtlety and invisibility renders them particularly difficult to confront (Sue 2010, 169). These types of behaviours or comments may be well intentioned, and prima facie socially acceptable. Seemingly benign statements may nevertheless have a detrimental impact by negating or nullifying the lived experience of adoption for members of the adoption triad. Examples include overly intrusive questioning, references to 'real' parents, being asked to be a spokesperson for adoptees or perceptions of adoptees as strange or dysfunctional (Garber 2014, 43-52).

Baden (2016, 8-12) identifies a number of adoption microaggression themes, which illustrate the aforementioned discursive constructions of adoption (adoption as stigmatised family-building and adoption as pathology). "*Biology is best/normative"* relates to a belief in the superiority, permanence and authenticity of biological ties compared to those formed through adoption or foster care. "*Bad seed adoptees*" involves the depiction of adoptees as rejected or unwanted children, or the attribution of problems experienced by adoptees to personal or inherent deficits. "*Cultural limbo and invalidation of heritage*" emerges out of the intersection between racial and adoption microaggressions, experienced by transracial[24] adoptees. Examples include transracial adoptees being asked why they are unable to speak the language of their ethnic group, which then requires them to reveal their adoptive

[24] The term transracial is commonly used in international adoption literature to refer to the adoption of "racially different" children by adoptive parents (Lee 2003, 712). Recognising that racialisation happens both within and beyond adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand, I chose to use this term over that of 'cross-cultural'.

status, and an adoptee being told s/he is 'not really of his or her birth ethnicity' because s/he were adopted into a White family.

Other themes are microaggressions in a more positive guise, which may nonetheless have negative connotations for members of the adoption kinship network due to their denial and misrepresentation of lived experience. As a microinvalidation, "*grateful adoptees*" proposes that adoptees are both lucky and privileged to have been adopted ('chosen') based on their 'bad seed' origins, implying that gratitude is owed for being taken into a 'good home'. The "*adoption is a 'win-win' situation*" theme idealises adoption as a solution to the dual problems of orphaned children and childless couples, ignoring the pain of birth parent relinquishment and loss of history. Finally, "*love is enough*" diminishes the importance of biological relatedness thereby contradicting bionormativity, maintaining that a 'good home' and 'loving family' will overcome any adoption-related trauma (Baden 2016, 8-17).

A further effect of living within the "adoption paradox" is silence – at individual, interpersonal and institutional/societal levels. Adoptee voices are silenced as a by-product of social power relations that uphold a bionormative moral order (Blake and Coombes 2015, 57). As a microaggression, silence refers to the avoidance of discussion of an adopted person's adoptive status, despite awareness or an implicit reference. This was the most commonly occurring microaggression theme in Garber's study (2014, 43, 110), although it was not considered as upsetting on account of it being an absence rather than presence of an action (Garber 2014, 66). Silence bears some connection with the "rejection-of-difference" orientation of the closed adoption period (Kirk 1964, 62-3, 90), at odds with the progression towards openness in recent decades.

Adoption microaggressions are a key mechanism through which members of the adoption kinship network are made aware of their pathological status (Brodzinsky 1990, 17). However, adoption microaggressions are difficult to mitigate due to the unconscious nature of the biased attitudes underpinning them. People's knowledge about adoption is often based on myths and stereotypes, uncritical narratives that exist in the wider cultural imaginary. To complicate matters, adoptees, birth parents and adoptive families may themselves commit adoption microaggressions, internalising their own oppression (Baden 2016, 19), perhaps compelled into reproducing dominant discourses.

Search-for-origins and reunion narratives

The adoption rights movement gave voice to the experiences of adoptees and their struggles, which had been largely silenced. Advocating for the rights of adoptees also served to challenge some of the misconceptions about searching for birth origins. As part of this adoption 'activism', search-for-origins

narratives played a critical part in rallying support for the opening of birth records (Herman 2012, n.p). Adoptee rights activists invoked the logic of biological kinship in order to justify the search for 'real' genealogy on moral grounds, and in terms of the "inviolability of the blood relation" (De Soto 2004, 195). The importance of birth origins in realising self-understanding and identity (Sales 2012, 13), made for a particularly compelling narrative that came to influence not only policy and legislative changes, but individual adoptee narratives. Adoptees were increasingly expected to narrate their decisions to search (or not) for birth family and genealogical origins. One of two themes were observed to dominate adoptee accounts of why they searched. This included either an ethic of self-discovery, drawing on narratives of individuality and identity to justify search, or an ethic of reciprocity, a narrative of responsibility or loyalty towards others including adoptive parents, that might preclude searching (Wegar 1992, 98-9).

The reunion of adoptee and birth family provides the 'climax' to most search narratives (Melosh 2002a, 229). As adoptees anticipate what might be the outcomes of search, two prototypical reconnection discourses emerge. A commonly reported construction of "romanticised reconnection" (Scharp 2013, 312-315) privileges the dominant discourse of biological kinship and genealogical meaning of family with the expectations of physical resemblance and an immediate connection or rapport with a welcoming mother (Melosh 2002a, 230). In contrast, "pragmatic reconnection" (Scharp 2013, 315) constructs reunion as a genealogical and health/medical information 'fact-finding' exercise, and a guaranteed connection is not anticipated due to lack of relational history. While these narratives differ considerably in their expectancies, Scharp (2013, 315) argues that they both convey a level of certainty and clarity regarding outcome. What emerges in reunion, experientially and narratively, is much less clear, however.[25]

The uncertainty of the search and reunion endeavour has been emphasised in some adoptee accounts – what or who might be 'found' is completely unknown (Carsten 2007, 83). Furthermore, reunion narratives vary; while some may affirm the search movement's belief that reunion heals the losses of the past, others may feature unhappy endings in which the losses of adoption are not able to be overcome, or may be amplified by relationship failure or rejection (Melosh 2002a, 231; Carsten 2007, 83; Hughes 2017, 73-76; Scharp 2013, 315-18). More favourably, participants may establish belonging to both birth families and adoptive families, but the birth family relationship may nonetheless be confusing and an adoptee's "rightful place" or extent of involvement never openly

[25] There are a number of gaps in search and reunion narratives, notably those adoptees who do not trace and are not traced by their biological relatives, and also the experiences of male adoptees and birth fathers (Melosh 2002a, 221). In published and researched accounts, there is something of a self-selection bias – those who choose to search and to narrate their experience publicly likely differ from those who do not.

defined, discussed or negotiated (Browning 2005, 110, 120). Melosh (2002a, 231) and Browning (2005, ii) consider this a struggle of negotiating relationships that do not fit normative kinship categories – there may be a sense of "built-in closeness" due to the parent-child connection and "blood bond", but then a limited capacity for dealing with intimacy on the basis of being only newly acquainted. This variety of reunion experiences and narratives reflects both the complexity of human relationships, and the complexity of adoption.

Problematically, although discourses of 'nature' are supported in an almost universal desire to know about genetic heritage, what a biological or 'natural' connection promises is more often than not unfulfilled in reunion. At this point, an adoptee's search for origins may evolve into a search for narrative, or sense-making (De Soto 2004, 194). Where the dominant reunion narrative, or romantic narrative of return (McLeod 2015, 136) cannot be told, a lesser experience of self-understanding may be narrated, or new adoption narratives fashioned (Homans 2013, 121-2). Some of the narrative challenges involved are explored below.

Adoptee narrativisation

Understanding the reasons they were placed for adoption, and forming a sense of self and identity in the absence of information and relationships with birth parents, are important parts of adoptee narrativisation (Baxter et al. 2012, 274; Howe 2009, 9). Reflecting these focuses, themes of 'reasons' and 'roots' predominate in adoptee stories of their lives. However, constructing coherent and complete narratives can be challenging for adoptees, due to the need to account for multiple strands of family and individual narratives, their own and others' absences, and gaps in what is remembered or known (Homans 2013, 112). Furthermore, due to the unfolding nature of reunion relationships, narratives may shift and evolve; in this sense adoptee narratives capture the most salient aspects of the adoptee's lived experience, *at a given point in time* (Scharp 2013, 307).

Research that explores how adoptees narrate their experiences is limited. However, Baxter et al. (2012, 271) analysed the coherence of online adoption stories from 100 adoptees, along with those of 100 birth mothers and 100 adoptive parents. They examined sequential organisation, orientation, causal explanations, congruence of affect with content, and sense-making. Adoption stories overall were found to be more incoherent than coherent, and adoptees' accounts scored lowest on congruence of affect and sequential organisation compared to adoptive parents and birth mothers. The authors concluded that adoption, as a stigmatised departure from the normative life course script, involving mixed messages, emotions and complexities of meaning, complicates narrative coherence considerably for members of the adoption triad. For adoptees specifically, possessing only second-hand information after the adoption event itself, and/or a static and incomplete entrance story, meant

there was either too little, or confusing information to cohere into a meaningful, ordered and resolved narrative (Baxter et al. 2012, 276, 277, 279). An account that creates a sense of order and meaning out of disruption is a powerful symbolic device, comforming to norms surrounding an ideal "predictable, knowable and continuous" life course (Becker 1997, 7). Given the importance placed on coherence in narrative, this suggests a heavy "narrative burden" for the adoptee that is also linked to their narration of self and identity (Leinaweaver 2008, 116-7; Ballard 2010, 1).

Adoptee positionality and subjectivity

Adoptees' awareness of and feelings towards their (adoptive) positioning, develops out of reflexivity, and interaction in the world ("adoptionality": Zhao 2012, 204). Where positioning can be extra-discursive (i.e. outside of discourse, including material, macro-social), positionality is purely discursive – at a certain point a person becomes cognisant of the meaning of their positioning, whether it is treated or discussed favourably by others, and its association with particular powers, resources, opportunities or privileges (Sanchez 2006, 38). Positionality also entails subjectivity, or one's experience of a particular positioning, subject to and mediated by hegemonic and critical anti-hegemonic discourses (Sanchez 2006, 39). These experiences may lead to either acceptance of one's positioning, or, where experiences are of alienation, non-parity, constraints and inconsistencies, critical questioning, rejection of hegemonic ideologies or disidentification with one's own group may result.

The narratives and experiences outlined above influence adoptee positionality and subjectivity in different ways. Adoption entrance narratives largely adhere to constructions of adoption as altruistic act, salvation or rescue of the relinquished child (Kim 2010, 254), and they are internalised, or taken up by the adopted child in how they think or talk about their adoption. Although some of the messages in the entrance narratives may conflict (e.g. rescue/chosen child) and cause confusion, the chosen child theme in particular has been found to be associated with a positive sense of self. Conversely, adoption microaggressions in everyday talk largely reproduce bionormative discourses, positioning the adoptee as the different other while suggesting the ideal adoption and adoptee ("win win", "grateful"). As is noted, adoptees may respond by internalising these microaggressions; at the very least, microaggressions expose the adoptee to unfavourable perceptions regarding their adoptive status.

Search-for-origins narratives involve the adoptee drawing on adoption discourses in a more agential way, through the employment of bionormative discourse to argue *for* access to birth origins, and in anticipation of a positive outcome. To some extent this involves buying into dominant notions of self-actualisation and biographical continuity, but the adoptee may also have to wrestle with being perceived as an 'ungrateful' adoptee for searching. The narratives that emerge from the experience of

reconnection with birth families are likely to be far less ‘romantic’, challenging dominant discourses somewhat. Finally, adoptees may be compelled to narrate, and make sense of their adoptive experiences in the form of a coherent narrative. However, research suggests that incoherence is likely, as a product of the gaps in narrative, the divergence from the bionormative script, the discursive paradox(es) surrounding adoption, and the irresolvable contradictions that result (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 83). As these examples of discourses and narratives elucidate, it is likely that the adoptee’s positionality changes over the life course, as they grapple with different meanings and experiences of adoption. This positionality and subjectivity is further explored in the next chapters, with a particular focus on the implications for adoptee identities.

Chapter Three:
Theorising Adoptive Identity

In comparison to the stories told by other members of the 'adoption triad', the primary preoccupation of adoptees is with identity (Baxter et al. 2012, 274). Indeed, the wish for a more 'complete' sense of self and identity, and for information about and connection with 'roots', has been found to be one of the strongest themes in adoptees' search and reunion experiences (Howe 2009, 9). On the basis that self is embedded as well as embodied, socially constructed and constituted by cultural context (Bignall 2010, 6), it follows that adoptee selves and identities are constructed and constituted by the experience of adoption, and the way in which adoption, as a phenomenon, is constructed (Beauchesne 1997, 2). In the following sections, a chronology of adoptive identity research is presented, which discusses both prevailing approaches and cross-disciplinary debates as they correspond to the key identity dimensions of substance and essence. These dimensions demarcate a key distinction between positivist and 'post'-paradigms, which has significant implications for the theorisation of identity in relation to adoption.

Positivism, developmental and family psychology

The application of identity theory to adoptees follows the pattern of paradigmatic developments generally, from positivism to post-positivism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and postmodernism. More positivistic conceptions are characterised by the treatment of identity as an objective, fixed, essential quality (Côté 2006, 9; Woodward 1997a, 3); as such, adoption is perceived as a complicating factor for the formation of a stable, continuous and coherent identity. The definition of *adoptive identity* has become progressively more prescriptive, shifting from "one's understanding of self as an adopted individual", or "the meaning one makes of the fact that he or she is adopted" (Grotevant 1992, 78), to the *integration* of adoption into one's overall sense of personal identity (Grotevant 1997, 4), self (Colaner, Kranstuber Horstman and Rittenour 2017, 18), or in relation to social identities such as ethnic identity (Maguire Pavao 1997a, 199). Within this perspective, there are two general challenges to identity formation for the adoptee, underpinned by bionormativity: the absence of biological family or connection, and membership of a stigmatised family form. A number of authors (Brodzinsky and Palacios 2005; Brodzinsky, Schechter and Henig 1993; Grotevant 1997;

Hoksbergen 1997; Iwanek 1997; Maguire Pavao 1997b; Triseliotis 2000) have identified specific (including additional) developmental identity tasks for the adoptee, outlined below.

Developmental identity tasks specific to adoption

Re-attachment to new parent(s)

A raft of research (Bowlby 1977; Erikson 1968; Brodzinsky and Schechter 1990; McGinn 2007, 65-7) confirms the fundamental importance of bonding and attachment between infants/children and primary caregivers in the development of identity; indeed, the construction of the self has shown to be dependent on the quality of children's early attachment experiences (Triseliotis 2000, 83). The attachment relationship informs "working models" of internal representations about self and others, including whether caregivers are loving, responsive and reliable, and the self is worthy of love, care, and attention (McGinn 2007, 65). In the case of adoption, this process is complicated by separation from biological parents and subsequent (not always immediate) placement with adoptive parents, rendering the cultivation of a sense of security, trust and belonging particularly important. A healthy attachment relationship engenders trust, and trust in turn supports healthy separation–individuation, an important achievement and part of the developing concept of self (McGinn 2007, 67).

Reflecting the relational family context, Brodzinsky (1987, 30-33) hypothesises that the adoptive parents' resolution of issues of infertility and their acceptance of adoption as an alternative form of parenthood is likely to have a bearing on the development of trust. The child's pursuit of autonomy, individuation and differentiation from parents during the pre-school years may create anxiety for both parties as the parents begin to tell a child that he or she is adopted (Hoopes 1990, 154).

Integrating in the developing self the knowledge of being adopted

Disclosure of the fact of adoption introduces young children to the notion of difference, or "differentness" (Grotevant 1997, 8[26]) – in this case the concept of two families, one biological and one psychosocial (Triseliotis 2000, 84). It is not until children are between 6 and 7 years that they have the cognitive ability to acknowledge and understand the full meaning of this (Brodzinsky 1984, 30; Triseliotis 2000, 85). A positive reception is more likely if adoptive parents have come to terms with and are able to acknowledge their difference from biological parents, as well as that of their adopted children (Kirk 1964, 44, 58). Hoopes (1990, 157) hypothesised from one comparative study that the lower levels of individuation observed in adoptive compared to biological families may signify a

[26] There is a subtle but important distinction between difference and differentness. Where difference refers to points or ways in which people are dissimilar, differentness refers to the state or quality of being different.

"glossing over" of and a level of defensiveness regarding their adoptive differences. This can complicate the separation–individuation process that is repeated in adolescence, when identity formation is a central focus (McGinn 2007, 69).

Communication about adoption indicates as well as impacts how adoptive families function (Minniear 2016, 1, 22). The exploration of adoption issues among adoptive family members and the expression and support of emotions surrounding adoption are critical in "healthy adoption adaptation." (Brodzinsky 2006, 4). Openness within the family and frequency of adoption-related conversation have been found to support adoptive identity formation (Hoopes 1990, 163; Von Korff and Grotevant 2011, 399; Colaner and Soliz 2017, 624-625; Brodzinsky 2006, 4-6; Colaner et al. 2017, 15). A climate of communicative openness within the family may well influence adoptees' self-exploration of their thoughts and feelings about adoption. In addition, important foundations of self-definition are established in formative years. However, because exploring the personal meaning of adoption is a lifelong process, adoptive identity development extends well beyond the formative years, and the confines of the adoptive family (Grotevant et al. 2007, 79).

Awareness and acknowledgement of one's ancestry, ethnic/racial heritage and difference[27]

The adoptee's family of origin and ancestry constitutes a significant aspect of their personal and social identities (Triseliotis 2000, 85). A number of researchers consider that a full or complete understanding of self is not possible when there are gaps in knowledge about one's background; in the adoptee's case, gaps in knowledge about biological kin (Brodzinsky et al. 1993; Haimes and Timms 1985; Triseliotis 1973). Terms such as genealogical bewilderment (Sants 1964) and psychic homelessness (Hoksbergen 1997) have been coined in psychiatry and psychology to describe the pathology that might result, and the corresponding need for historical connection to resolve identity issues (as discussed earlier).

Velleman (2005, 365) relates the need for reconnection to the process of identification; a "self-concept of the family-resemblance kind", in which an individual learns who they are, based on who they are *like*, in terms of looks, personal manner, styles of thinking and feeling, temperament, proclivities and such. Without this, Velleman posits that not knowing biological relatives must resemble a form of (self) blindness (368). Velleman's thinking is validated by the accounts of some adoptee writers, who search in the hope of finding someone that looks like them, a "human mirror"

[27] This is an aspect in which adoptive parents are given considerably more guidance in now than in the closed stranger adoption period. For example, parents embarking on a transnational or intercountry adoption would be advised to i) consider their attitudes towards the respective countries or cultures in order to dispel any racist or skewed views that might negatively impact on their child's sense of identity and self-esteem (26-7), ii) consider themselves a transracial family rather than seeing the child as a child of another race (27), and iii) develop a family identity as multicultural, integrating but not ignoring the distinctively different cultures (Maguire Pavao 2005).

(Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 91-2). In an adoptive family, lack of physical resemblance underscores a sense of difference, particularly in transracial adoptions where looks are indicators of 'other' ethnic background and heritage. From a psychological perspective, acknowledging but not denying or being preoccupied with birth origins and dual ethnic/racial heritage, is deemed to be the optimal endpoint (Triseliotis 2000, 88), an indicator of a secure or "integrated" adoptive identity (Grotevant et al. 2007, 82).

Dealing with the sense of loss and rejection that adoption inevitably conveys

Increased understanding and awareness may bring with it some strong feelings of loss and rejection for the adoptee, typically after age 5 and intensifying in adolescence (Triseliotis 2000, 82). As children acquire logical reasoning, social cognition, and increasing reflect on themselves as adoptees, they may come to understand that gaining a family through adoption also entails losing a birth family (Barroso and Barbosa-Ducharne 2019, 878-9). In understanding what adoption is about, adoptees may also experience a sense of rejection, with some impact on self-esteem and self-worth, relationships and trust (Triseliotis 2000, 88; Powell and Afifi 2005, 141). These have broader psychological impacts that have a bearing on identity via the self-concept and the sense of self-in-context (Grotevant et al. 2007, 79). There is some evidence that feelings of loss and rejection can be eased in a significant way by an empathic and secure adoption experience, and positive communication (Triseliotis 2000, 89; Barroso and Barbosa-Ducharne 2019, 878).

Formation of identity through resolution of developmental tasks

From a developmental perspective, the ultimate aim is the "positive resolution" of the tasks described above, leading to the formation of a 'strong' identity and increased sense of self-worth (Triseliotis 2000, 89). According to Erikson's model, ego identity is established at the end of adolescence, a culmination of trust, autonomy, initiative and industry/mastery, as well as exploration and commitment (Kroger and Marcia 2011, 33). Drawing on Erikson's work, empirical investigations of adoptive identity have outlined constituent components and a range of resulting identity statuses.[28]

Several studies concur that achieving "developed" or "integrated" adoptive identities requires sufficient reflective exploration to critically examine and integrate adoption into a larger sense of self,

[28] For example, Dunbar and Grotevant (2004, 142) developed a taxonomy of four distinct adoptive identities. '*Unexamined identities'* were associated with little emotion about adoption, low salience of adoptive identity and no or very limited exploration. '*Limited identities'* were characterised by openness to thinking about adoption, but limited importance as an aspect of self, and only moderate exploration. '*Unsettled identities'* related to narratives about adoption involving high levels of affect, salience and exploration. Lastly, '*integrated identities'* were marked by a balance of positive and negative affect about adoption, moderate salience of adoptive identity, and resolution of adoption issues (Dunbar and Grotevant 2004, 157-8).

but not to the extent that the adoptee is wholly 'preoccupied' or "unsettled" (Dunbar and Grotevant 2004, 157-8; Colaner 2011, 30-32; Colaner 2014, 144; Colaner and Soliz, 612-614). Striking a balance between 'natural' curiosity and acknowledging is 'ideal' (Triseliotis 1997, 88), enabling the adoptee to process any adoption-related grief, construct their adoption as meaningful, and experience healthy levels of self-esteem (Colaner et al. 2017, 5-6).

Perhaps owing to its clinical focus, positivist-oriented psychological thinking is somewhat prescriptive regarding healthy or adaptive adoptee attachment, consideration of adoptive status, birth origins and ethnic heritage, and adoptive identification. A range of scales have been developed to measure and assess each aspect of adoptee development, and categorise adoptee experiences accordingly. While there is some recognition of the complexity of these developmental and identity tasks and the bearing of external attitudes, norms and values (Grotevant et al. 2007, 79), because of psychology's tendency to focus primarily on individuals, prescribing particular endpoints or states has the effect of pathologising others. [29]

Family identity

In the fields of psychology and more recently, communication studies, Erikson's model has been utilised to explore other aspects of identity related to adoption, including those located within the family. As is apparent in the considerations of adoptee development above, the adoptive family plays a major role in assisting the adoptee through various life and identity stages (Hoopes 1990, 162). Aside from being a site of socialisation and psychological development, the family provides a unique relationship context, which also has a bearing on identity in its various forms (Colaner and Soliz 2017, 614). In terms of family identity, it is within the relationships (sibling, parent-child) and roles of the family that children learn working models of parent-child relationships (attachment theory) and patterns of behaviour (social learning theory), that tend to be repeated when they form their own families, in a form of intergenerational continuity (Scabini and Manzi 2011, 575).

The second component, that of belonging to a specific family, is a form of social identity, or *shared family identity*, where one's family constitutes an in-group with which one identifies. Indeed, the family is generally the most salient in-group category for individuals (Scabini & Manzi 2011, 575). Research has shown that a cohesive shared family identity provides members with a deep sense of shared belonging, as well as positive levels of wellbeing and self-esteem (Colaner et al. 2017, 6). Family identity is created through communication, and with non-traditional families such as those

[29] Godon-Decoteau and Ramsey (2018, 17) take issue with the 'success or failure' paradigm underlying much of the extant transracial adoption research, noting that their qualitative analysis of Korean adoptees' thoughts on their adoptions yielded a more complex account of positive and negative aspects.

created by adoption, discourse[30] plays an increased role in how identity is established. Galvin (2006a, 9) argues that in families not fully formed through both biological and legal connections, members depend heavily on "elaborated discourse" to cohere and adhere to each other, to provide members with an internal sense of identity, as well as an identity presented to outsiders. A combination of internal and external boundary management strategies are likely to be employed, including naming, discussing, narrating, ritualising, labelling, explaining, legitimising and defending (Galvin 2006a, 10-15; Galvin, Braithwaite and Bylund 2015, 6-7).[31]

There are some clear correlations between family identity and adoptive identity, and also adoption communicative openness, as discussed earlier. Adoptive family identities have been found to be 'stronger' when adoptees are more engaged in reflective exploration but not to the point of being highly 'preoccupied'. Secondly, adoptive identity and shared family identity with adoptive parents is strongly associated with self-esteem. Finally, adoptive parents' open communication about adoption is related to increased adoptive identity work and decreased preoccupation. These findings appear to verify earlier writers' assertions that open communication contributes directly to resolution of adoption and associated identity issues, with consequent positive feelings about the self (Colaner et al. 2017, 16-20).

However, in the same piece of research, openness and identifying strongly with adoptive family was related to decreased *identification with* the birth mother. Although increased reflective exploration was associated with adoptee-birth mother *contact*, increased exploration appeared to support rather than detract from higher levels of shared adoptive family identity. On the one hand, these findings reflect the tensions created by dual family identifications – that the more adoptees work to understand their adoption as it defines them and negotiate belonging to birth and adoptive families, the more they may experience an intergroup (i.e. in-group versus out-group) dynamic. On the other hand, these findings highlight the beneficial potential of adoptive identity work generated by birth family contact (Colaner et al. 2017, 17-18). The complex relational aspects of adoptee identity work, within and beyond the adoptive family, are apparent.

[30] Galvin's use of the term discourse refers literally to discussion, conversation, talk, communication et cetera.

[31] External boundary management strategies include labelling: identifying the adoptive family tie to others; explaining: giving reasons for the labelled family relationship, or providing detail on "how it works"; legitimising: invoking law or custom to position relationships as genuine and conforming to standards and expectations of 'family'; and defending: justifying or maintaining the adoptive family's validity against opposition. Internal boundary management strategies include naming; discussing; narrating: the emergence of family stories and representations, telling and re-telling; ritualising: how families enact their identity through major celebrations and mundane routines (Galvin 2006a, 11-15).

Summary

The view of identity traditionally assumed in relation to adoptees is very much a psychological or microsociological one, drawing on concepts of ego and personal identity, identity statuses, self-structure, social identity, identity hierarchies, and assigned identities. Although social construction and narrative have been increasingly embraced by psychological adoption researchers (Grotevant et al. 2007, 81), stability, continuity and coherence are emphasised (Grotevant 1997, 5). Several distinct forms of identity are acknowledged (personal, social, genealogical, racial/ethnic, physical: see Table 1 below), although it is asserted that these must constitute a coherent whole (Brodzinsky et al. 1993, 157); Grotevant (1997, 10) considers the coherence of an adoptee's life story/narrative an indicator of the extent of identity integration. Triseliotis (2000, 92) acknowledges that a hierarchy of identities will change depending on age, new needs, events and circumstances in adoptees' lives; for instance, biological origins may be of greatest importance initially, but may well recede following contact with birth family members. He asks to what extent identities can compensate for each other, for example, if there are gaps in genealogical or ethnic awareness, will this be compensated for by high quality relationships and a strong sense of belonging?

Table 1: The major identities in relation to the whole self and the role of adoption in each.
Sources: Adapted from Thoburn (1994), cited in Triseliotis (2000), 90.

Social identity (self)	**Physical identity (self)**	**Psychological identity (self)**
• Awareness of our relations with others • Awareness of how others see us	• Awareness of one's body (how it looks, feels, sounds, smells)	• Capacity for making relationships • Ability to control impulses • Ability to have empathy for others • Our view of our intelligence
In relation to adoption	**In relation to adoption**	**In relation to adoption**
• An accepting community • Absence of stigma • Racial, ethnic and cultural awareness	• Physical reality of birth parents	• Genealogical information • Answers to questions, e.g. why given up • Opportunities for contact
Whole identity or self (self-esteem, self-worth)		

As Table 1 shows, even within a psychological view of identity, the adoptee's construction of self/identity (deemed an intrapsychic component) is subject to broader influences, extending beyond

the quality of family relationships and accomplishment of developmental tasks, to the social world and community attitudes towards those brought up in 'different' circumstances (Haimes and Timms 1985, 85; Triseliotis 2000, 95; Kirk 1964, 20). Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler and Esau (2000, 381) perceive each of these influences or levels as entailing a negotiation between core and context, throughout the life course and during major life transitions.

The psychological conceptions of adoptive identity outlined above align with particular aspects of post-positivist realist theory, notably the emergence of self, reflexive consciousness and personal identity. The experience of the adopted body is also discussed, in terms of physical resemblance and visibility of particular forms of 'differentness' such as race/ethnicity. This grounds adoptee identity in a material reality informed by discourse, even if it is not explicitly described as such. Where the research and theorisation diverges is in the objectivity accorded to empirical data, interpreted as more or less reflecting a 'truth' of identity factors and correlations, and also an adherence to, rather than interrogation of, prevailing norms. The modernist "compulsion to generate order from disorder" (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 78) is apparent in these psychological accounts, which pathologise the 'messiness' of adoptive identity. In studies involving the administration of identity and adoption scales of various kinds and cluster analysis, there is no room for multiple or conflicting narratives within individual accounts, only discrete categories. This means that a more nuanced consideration of adoptee identity formation and the "multiple, situational and conflicting nature of identification" may be overlooked (Henze-Pedersen 2017, 18). In order to provide a more well-rounded account, and flesh out the discursive aspects of post-positivist realist theory, altogether different epistemologies are needed.

'Post'-scholarship and anti-essentialism

The theorising of adoptive identity in terms of developmental psychology, with some use of microsociological, interactionist and narrative concepts, has contributed significantly to understanding and practice; Erikson's theory of identity development for example, offered new insights as to why adoptees need to know their origins (Griffith 1997b, 47; Iwanek 1997, 65). Delany (1997, 117) takes an opposing view, considering that positivist methods and positions have devalued individual, subjective experience, and subsequently constrained the development of knowledge about adoption. Furthermore, the focus on members of the adoption 'triad' has led adoption and its effects to be located within those individuals, and responsibility for dealing with the effects of adoption squarely with the individual. Subsequently, Delany argues that adoption has been decontextualised and the social construction of adoption denied (see also Wegar 1997, 60; Beauchesne 1997, 10-11).

It is the wider social and discursive context that a number of writers – philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and others – have identified as leading to the identity problems encountered by adoptees, rather than adoption per se. They argue that bionormative ideals of family, kinship and personhood render adoption profane, stigmatise adoptive families as an inferior family form (Kressier and Bryant 1996, 391; Wegar 1997, 44), and construct adoptees as split, broken, wounded, incomplete, lost or insufficiently grounded or anchored (Volkman 2003, 43; Kim 2010, 91; Hughes 2017, 157). Essentialism and substantivism are the core problematics, in particular a bionormative model of identity "that celebrates sameness, is founded on nature, and believes in essences" (Leighton 2005, 155). According to Leighton, this emphasis on substance rather than process or relation not only excludes or negates those who grow up without their biological kin, but denies the legitimacy of adoptive identity, in other words, an identity that emerges from 'being adopted'. Patton (2000, 112) also takes issue with the privileging of biological substance and connection in relation to identity, arguing that it is not the biology or genetics per se that provides individuals with self-understanding, but what is *inferred* from resemblances with family members. Cultural discourses of biology and genetics give meaning to identities rather than some essential property of biology itself.

It must be emphasised that the exploration of the socially constructed dimensions and meanings of adoption is not intended to undermine the experience of adoptees. Similarly to a post-positivist realist position, Leon (2002, 658) argues that tracing the discursive roots of adoption losses, for instance, does not render these any less 'real'. The same applies to adoptee subjectivities and identities – identifying their discursive composition does not diminish their legitimacy or correspondence with 'reality'. Rather, the discursive nature of reality is revealed, potentially more amenable to challenge and change than would likely be the case with "biological givens."

Beauchesne (1997) intended to unsettle dominant discourses that reify the categories 'biological' or 'born to' and render adoptees 'other' and 'deficient', by investigating the constructed meanings associated with adoptive identity or subject position. Her hope was that adoptee difference would be recognised and celebrated rather than used to reinscribe and reinvest in in biologically-based kinship and identity. However, while Beauchesne succeeded in elucidating the discursive production of the adopted subject position and experience, her interviewee accounts overwhelmingly demonstrated adoptees' investment in the adoption discourse, their experiences of loss and incompleteness in terms of "the primal wound" and their struggle to achieve 'wholeness' and identity integration via biological connection. The "deficit identity position" that Beauchesne's participants

took up appeared to be that constructed by biologically essentialist notions of identity, rather than a challenge to them (Beauchesne 1997, 69).[32]

The notion that a 'true' or 'authentic' identity may yet be realised through reunion with biological family, only delayed by adoption rather than irrevocably altered, holds significant appeal for some adoptees. Reading Sandra Patton's transracial adoptee interviewee accounts, Homans (2013, 193) perceives that in spite of adoptees' navigation of instability and considerable complexity, there is a desire for a "simple, essential correspondence between genetically inherited looks and social and cultural identity."[33] Wills (2016, 213) makes the same observation, of a desired but unavailable "tangible, static, singular identity" in Asian adoptee narratives. Despite Asian adoptees being perceived as embodying anti-essentialism and social constructivism, Wills (2016, 204-5) discusses the persistence of essentialist desires in adoptee narratives. Wills terms this "paradoxical essentialism" – that in understanding their subjectivity/identity, an individual may be simultaneously constructivist, essentialist and anti-essentialist. In the case of adoptees, a post-adoptive identity must be constructed, given their lack of coherent and reliable ancestry and origins. However, where essence is taken to mean what one is rather than what one chooses (Wills 2016, 205), transracial adoptees are simultaneously identified in essential terms (i.e. racialised) and compelled to identify in terms of their essential origins (a pre-adoptive identity tied to an ancestral past and homeland). An insistence on anti-essentialism is therefore akin to colour-blind colonialism[34] (or assimilative universalism: Chen 2012, 164, 179, 195) – simultaneously recognising and negating an essentialised transracial adoptee subject.

In the literary narratives Wills analyses, post-adoptive and pre-adoptive identities co-exist, in opposition, both marked by an enduring liminality. That these accounts of identity are characterised by multiplicity, hybridity, non-resolution, anti-essentialism and essentialism, suggest the need for a careful, in-depth examination, i.e. to not be read as either essentialist or anti-essentialist, but potentially as both, and the resulting contradictions and tensions explored. While "constructed identity" is a

[32] These findings may have something to do with the selection criteria utilised by Beauchesne, and therefore the sample of adoptees involved in her research. The criteria included acknowledgement of struggling with the identity 'adopted' and questioning of the traditional view of adoption, and being a self-identified adoption advocate, expert and/or social/political activist engaged in some way to change current perceptions of adoption (Beauchesne 1997, 86). This highlights the challenges involved in resisting dominant discourses, and raises questions about what form/s of resistance are needed to achieve transformation.

[33] Brodwin (2002, 323) notes the enduring appeal of essentialist identities outside the academy, and a newly strengthened essentialist thinking about identity derived from new genetic knowledge, rapid advances in sequencing and analysing the human genome that "adds the cachet of objective science to the notion that one's identity is an inborn, natural and unalterable quality." Chen (2012, 165) also discusses the loss of the anti-essentialist viewpoint's "potency" outside the academy, whereby a swing away from social construction and toward biological and genetic determination not only reifies bio-genealogy but diminishes the adoptive family.

[34] See transracial adoption section for further discussion of colour-blindness in relation to adoption.

powerful and useful mode of analysis, this need not entail a rejection of the essences of ancestry and blood as "meaningless identity signifiers" (Wills 2016, 205-206).

Similar to Wills' analysis, adoptee accounts shared by Yngvesson and Mahoney (2000, 103) report limited closure or resolution of their liminality through connection to biological origins. It is no coincidence that these accounts are from transracial/transnational adoptees, and their pursuit of belonging and authenticity is complicated by hegemonic discourses around race, kinship and nation and therefore their being 'out of place' by virtue of their adoption. For Yngvesson and Mahoney (2000, 102), such narratives affirm several anti-essentialist assertions regarding identity: that there is no original or origin of identity, and neither is it awaiting in a 'homeland' to be rediscovered. It is never completed, never finished, always in process, a coming-to-terms with 'routes' rather than the so-called return to 'roots' (Hall 1997a, 38, Hall 1997b, 47; Hall 1996, 4).

Kim (2010, 97) identifies a further form of essentialism evident in adoptees' experiences and narratives that bears closer resemblance to anti-essentialism. Distinct from the biologism or genetic essentialism that prevails in public discourse about adoptees and their 'real' origins, identities or families, "contingent essentialism" refers to the identification of adoptees with one another on the basis of their shared experiences of unstable, uncertain origins and involuntarily forfeited historical and cultural connections (97). As articulated by one inter-country adoptee: "brothers and sisters, not by blood but by circumstance" (Kim Nguyen Edgar 2010 quoted in Taft, Dreyfus, Quartly and Cuthbert 2013, 75). Although adoptive family are also related by circumstance, this adoptee kinship is different in the sense of relying neither on familial roots or origins, *or* the bonds of nurture. The form of identity that this kinship gives rise to therefore goes beyond defying boundaries between the biogenetic and the discursive and embracing discursive constructions of the adoptee – adoptive experience is *the* defining signifier, without reference to either nature or nurture.

Ways of identifying that confound and challenge traditional binaries and categorisations are particularly appealing to many in the post-structural, postcolonial and postmodern fields. Homans (2013, 14), for instance, describes the ways in which adoptees and adoptive identity take up positions on the cultural side of the nature/culture divide, or refuse that division altogether as "exemplary". Chen (2012, 185) considers a "postmodern subjectivity" characterised by multiplicity and 'play' as freeing, imploring adoptees to claim as many mothers, fathers, homes, nations, names and identities as they wish. However, Yngvesson and Mahoney (2000, 103) are careful to remind us that adoptee identities are not simply playful or strategic, nor matters of choice. Living in "the tension of identity and difference" is neither comfortable nor without considerable constraint (see also Watkins 2006, 226).
Critical scholarship relating to adoptive identity tends towards anti-essentialism and strong social constructionism in order to better account for the uncertain, contradictory and dynamic experiences of

adoptees. Notions of *non*-resolution go some way towards correcting the false sense of certainty associated with psychological theories of adoptive identity. This work makes a significant contribution to a post-positivist realist conceptualisation, elucidating the profound influences of discourse and power, upon and outside the individual. For instance, Chen (2012, 181), describes the relationship between adoptee experiences and choices in narrative or identity as one involving considerable tension, inducing adoptees to minimise the potential for exclusion and lack of recognition by pursuing self-authentication or integration of "the impossible origin." However, this last point extends anti-essentialism to a problematic degree, undermining the potential for positive outcomes through a turn to origins or foundations. Similarly to psychological theorising, this stance pathologises adoptee discomfort with liminality, prescribing a 'right' form of adoptee positionality and subjectivity.

The accounts of transnational/transracial adoptees in particular, trouble poststructuralist and postmodern conceptions that might consider the world as a wholly discursive construct, and minimise the relationship of identity with a material body. Here, insights from critical race studies scholars such as Wills (2016) are important, and bear resemblance to the arguments of post-positivist realism. Wills argues that essentialism and biologism have become conflated, noting the critical implications of rejecting biological/genetic identity markers for racial/ethnic and indigenous peoples. Being asked, as per anti-essentialism, to "disarticulate" their identities from the bodies and ancestry that they have been subjugated for historically, is ironic and dismissive of fundamental transracial realities (Wills 2016, 206). These 'realities' will be explored in further detail in the following chapter, which will outline the extant literature relating to the identity *experiences* of transracial, indigenous and Māori adoptees.

Chapter Four:
'Other' Adoptee Identity Trajectories

Where the previous chapter discussed transracial/transnational adoption literature as it corresponds to essentialism and anti-essentialism, the three sections of this chapter consider literature related specifically to the experiences of transracial, indigenous and Māori adoptees. Here, new discourses come into focus, and the meaning of essentialism in relation to identity shifts. In Western contexts, race invokes a particular preoccupation with authenticity, linked to ancestry and cultural heritage (Cheng 2004, 64, 80). The term 'trajectory' is used to describe adoptees' experiences of identity *over time,* according to life course and *in relation to* their journey with adoption. The term is sufficiently broad to encompass a wide range of experiences, directions, 'routes' and 'arcs', not all linear or 'progressive'. The chapter concludes with a summary of the implications for this research, in terms of focus and methodology.

Transracial adoption: Paradox and identity

Focusing on the narrated experiences of adoptees has been enlightening for the study of identity formation, revealing the tensions entailed in claiming or constructing identities, simultaneously contradicting and supporting essentialist and non-essentialist accounts. Transracial, transethnic and transcultural adoptions have been particularly generative, across the paradigmatic spectrum, as "prime sites to explore the forging of complex narratives that mark identity" (Watkins 2006, 260).

In the context of Western or predominantly European societies, Triseliotis (2000, 86-8), Grotevant (et al. 2000, 384-5) and others consider that an adoptee's ethnic heritage complicates identity formation, introducing an additional dimension of 'difference' to resolve or integrate. Treacher (2000, 24) links divergent views of the impact of transracial adoption upon identity to polarised opinions of transracial adoption in general. Those against transracial adoption claim that it leads to identity confusion, conflict and adoptees ill-prepared for life in a racist and divided society. Those for transracial adoption assert that a loving adoptive family can support a child through these additional identity challenges. Similarly to the preceding literature, these debates centre around whether a 'unified' identity is achievable or not.

Ethnic, racial and cultural identity[35] are the types of identity discussed predominantly in psychological transracial adoption literature. Despite relating to distinct types of identity, these terms are used somewhat interchangeably (e.g. racial-ethnic, cultural-racial). Owing to the enculturation of transracial adoptees largely within white adoptive families, the central focus is the 'dissonance' between adoptee cultural identities and their racial/ethnic heritage, and between their personal or self-identity and group identity. In general, ethnic identity is used to refer to the identification of the adoptee with their ancestry, or sense of belonging to their ethnic group (Rotheram and Phinney 1987, 13, quoted in Hollingsworth 1997, 104). However, because of their enculturation outside of their ethnic communities, in a closed adoption this form of identification is limited to recognition of racial difference and heritage rather than extensive knowledge of ethnic culture, traditions, or language. This is often gauged through adoptees' use of racial/ethnic self-descriptors and expressions of pride or comfort with their race and ethnicity (Lee 2003, 717). Findings from empirical research are mixed however. Several studies confirmed that racial/ethnic identity is affected by transracial adoption; domestic and international transracial adoptees were found to present with "significantly lower racial/ethnic identities" than same-race adoptees. They were also more likely to internalise the cultural worldview of their adoptive parents (including stereotyped impressions of their racial/ethnic group) and identify more strongly with majority culture than their ethnic cultures (Hollingsworth 1997, 114; Lee 2003, 718). What this means for transracial adoptees adopted to white parents is a 'cultural' identification as white, and a 'racial' identification as non-white. They cannot deny their cultural upbringing, but their appearance and racialisation by others means they cannot claim whiteness racially. Equally, they cannot claim non-white ethnicity due to their upbringing (Samuels 2010, 31).

Some studies have shown that even where adoptees develop a secure or strong racial/ethnic identity, the dissonance or discomfort between their seemingly disparate identification with their white family compared with their racial heritage, endures (Lee 2003, 718). However, Baden (2002, 189), via the application of the Cultural-Racial Identity Model[36], investigated the correlation of adoptive

[35] Ethnic identity is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct relating to "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behaviour that is due to ethnic group membership" (Rotheram and Phinney 1987, 13, quoted in Hollingsworth 1997, 104). Ethnicity is a broad concept of group affiliation based on shared culture, values, customs, beliefs, languages, history or traditions. Cultural identity refers to identification with "the entire set of beliefs, social behaviours, rites, customs, traditions, values, language and institutions of a given culture" (Harf, Skandrani, Sibeoni, Pontvent, Revah-Levy and Moro 2015, 2/19). Racial identity in contrast, tends to involve processes of racialisation, and external determination of 'race' based on visible markers such as skin colour, hair type and such. It has also been noted that ethnicity and race are often conflated, with the language of ethnicity used to refer to race instead (Bradby 1995, 413). Race and culture may also be conflated. Raleigh (2018, 172) notes the absence of race from discussions with prospective transracial adopters, but the use of the more palatable 'birth culture' instead.

[36] Couched in Eriksonian terms and concepts of identity, Baden and Steward (2000, 324) identified sixteen possible cultural-racial identities emerging out of an individual's location on two axes pertaining to cultural identity and racial identity, and according to adoptee/adoptive parental culture and race. Identities include various combinations of the

parental race/culture and adoptee race/culture, and found that no form of Cultural-Racial Identity was 'better' or 'higher' than others, nor linked with self-esteem. In a later review, Lee (2003, 716) attributed these mixed findings across the psychological field to the use of variable, unvalidated measures of racial/ethnic identity and study design flaws.

Transracial adoptee dissonance or discomfort with identity speaks to the desire of children to resemble their family, as a marker of belonging, but also societal expectations of racial/ethnic/cultural alignment, and race-kinship congruity (Wade 2012, 90). Transracial adoptive families contravene these expectations, and must account for this narratively, both within and outside the family (Galvin et al. 2015, 5-6; Goar, Davis and Manago 2017, 340-1[37]). At the family level, racial differences may be de-emphasised in order to achieve "normative familial sameness" (Park Nelson 2007, 203). Indeed, a colour-blind approach was traditionally encouraged by adoption professionals, consistent with mid-20th century societal racial discourse, as well as the "as if biological" myth of normative adoptive kinship (Kim 2010, 99; Myers 2019, 68, 71; Howell 2006, 124).[38] However, in parallel with the simultaneous denial of adoptive difference and reification of biological kinship and identity, colour-blind ideology produces a similar problem for the transracial adoptee. Their racial/ethnic difference is denied, but simultaneously subject to racialisation in what is a racially stratified society (Garber 2014, 6). The denial negates their lived experiences as racialised individuals, which may magnify feelings of racial alienation, non-validation and being alone in navigating these issues (Samuels 2009, 86-88).

While it is perhaps not surprising that transracial adoptees, "indoctrinated into whiteness" in childhood continue to identify in this way as they get older, there are consequences of identifying in a way that differs from the perceptions of others (i.e. socially assigned ethnicity). Moving from a family environment of racial invisibility, to, upon leaving home, a wider social context of racial visibility can be "complicated and difficult" (Park Nelson 2007, 200-202). First, individuals are generally expected to identify consistently with their physical appearance – thus, visibly transracial adoptees who identify as white are likely to be seen as inauthentic or experiencing an identity 'crisis' in which they are

following categories: pro-self cultural, bicultural, culturally undifferentiated, pro-parent cultural, pro-self racial, biracial, racially undifferentiated, and pro-parent racial.

[37] A very interesting finding from Goar et al.'s (2017, 350) research with white transracial adoptive parents who attended culture camps with their children, was that colour-blindness was "discursively entwined" with race-consciousness in two-thirds of their sample. This finding speaks to the pervasiveness and persistence of colour-blindness, even among parents who participate in and support activities that are race and ethnicity-conscious. The authors concluded that colour-blindness remains the default discourse, and that race consciousness, "though attainable [for white transracial adoptive parents], requires explicit effort on the part of adoptive parents." (351).

[38] The ideology of colour-blindness is an apparently "benevolent repositioning of race as a social rather than biological construct" (Park Nelson 2007, 196) (thereby associated with non- or anti-essentialism), which holds that the very act of recognising race perpetuates racism. According to this line of reasoning, if race is not recognised, there will be no racism (Quiroz 2007, 16).

denying their 'true' self[39]; and second, the adherence to discrete and bounded identity categories of either white or non-white entails the assumption that one must occupy one or other ethnic/cultural group, not both, nor move between them (Park Nelson 2007, 203).

Certainly, a recurring theme in transracial adoptee narratives is that of 'fitting into' existing categorisations of race, ethnicity and culture. Adoptees are in the position of having to make choices about how to identify, whether in accordance with the white cultural meaning systems within which they had been socialised, working to fulfill the social and cultural expectations of biologically-derived racial ascriptions, or something in-between (Patton 2000, 79). Many transracial adoptees report a profound sense of racial-in-betweeness (Park Nelson 2007, 205; Meier 1999, 27), which is not necessarily resolved by identifying as non-white or reconnecting with birth countries or cultures from which they are distanced by language, social and cultural experiences (Taft et al. 2013, 77; Meier 1999, 30-1). Adoptees learn that being acknowledged and accepted by racial/ethnic group members requires more than racial heritage or use of racial labels; some kind of socially sanctioned kinship tie is also needed – i.e. being recognised and accepted as kin by other ethnic group members (Samuels 2010, 34-5). For some this necessitates searching for birth parents, whereas others claim their adoptive family histories of their own, or immerse themselves in the history and cultures of ethnic and diasporic peoples (Patton 2000, 106).

Transracial adoptees differ in how they feel about the contingency and constructedness of their identities – some struggle to claim one identity, while others, often lighter-skinned, biracial adoptees, celebrate hybrid/multiple, fluid and contextual identifications (Patton 2000, 78; see also Samuels 2010, 36). For others still, the limited choices of identification available or permissible lead them to seek a "third space", in either transracial adoptee communities (the "contingent essentialism" identified by Kim (2010)), or race-neutral communities (Park Nelson 2007, 205). The possibility of new conditions not bound by notions of unified, pure and fixed culture, primordial race or nation, is what Hubinette (2004, 23) argues make the third space ideal for transracial/transnational adoptees.[40]

[39] This forms one part of the 'transracial adoption paradox' identified by Lee (2003, 711), in which he sought to describe transracial adoptees' experiences of growing up in a white family and being treated as an honorary white, but being seen by the rest of society as a racial-ethnic minority. When transracial adoptees don't identify or behave in a way deemed consistent with their race/ethnicity, they are deemed as problematic or flawed, or they may be perceived as always inauthentic because of their lack of lived experience within their racial/ethnic community.

[40] Hubinette considers that adoptees differ significantly from mixed-race or diasporic peoples, on the bases of their monocultural socialisation and diminished connection to homeland, transnational networks or territorialised communities. He perceives adopted Koreans specifically as "truly a unique group transgressing categories of race, citizenship, language, religion and culture" (22), therefore warranting an altogether different, post-colonial approach.

An additional focus in the transracial adoptee identity field is that of adoptees' acculturation to their "birth culture"[41] or ethnic community. Lee (2003, 720) notes that there is somewhat limited empirical evidence available for a range of cultural socialisation strategies; nonetheless, transracial adoptive parents nowadays are encouraged to bring aspects of their child's birth culture into everyday life, whether this be in the form of 'culture camps', attendance at ethnically diverse schools or exposure to particular ethnic contexts, learning aspects of culture and language, or heritage/homeland tours (Myers 2019, 68; Richards 2018, 4/18). Baden, Treweeke and Ahluwalia (2012, 389) term this process "reculturation" – an adoptee's active acculturation to or 'reclaiming' or a culture other than that of their adoptive parents' culture, or that which is dominant in their lived environment. Distinct from exposure during childhood, reculturation refers to education, immersion or experiential encounters sought out by the adoptee as part of identity development, which may extend well into adulthood. However, reculturation is not pursued by all transracial adoptees, and nor are the outcomes of reculturation the same for those who do. This highlights the wide variation in transracial adoptee positionality and subjectivity, warranting a deeper exploration.

Indigenous transracial adoptees in settler nations

The experiences of indigenous, Aboriginal or native[42] transracial adoptees are relatively under-explored compared to black, Korean, or Chinese transracial adoptees (Becker-Green 2009, 32; Nuttgens 2013, 1; Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia 1995, 37). Similarly to other adoptees, indigenous transracial adoptees grow up not knowing their birth families, and dealing with the associated losses – lack of resemblance to others, in many cases a feeling of not belonging, and an incoherent or incomplete life story or narrative (Carriere 2008, 66; Becker-Green 2009, 164-66; Nuttgens 2013, 5-7, 11-13; Harness 2008, 87).

Similarly to transracial adoptees in general, indigenous transracial adoptees grapple with a racialised identity, in which their race/ethnicity is constructed negatively, at least at the societal level if not in their adoptive family context. Their racial/ethnic identity is distinct or divergent from that of their adoptive family members, and in the case of many white adoptive families in the 1950s – 1970s, beyond the family's immediate experience and capacity to comprehend and accommodate, let alone nurture (Sinclair 2007, 70-71; Becker-Green 2009, 53; Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 411, 423; Read 1999, 37). A unique aspect of indigenous transracial

[41] The notion of "birth culture" is contested by some as an oxymoron – "…coined to construct an essentialised, identity-generating cultural origin even when no information about individual birth parents can be obtained" (Homans 2007, 61).
[42] All three terms are used in this section, reflecting the variety of context-specific terms used to identify indigenous peoples in the countries considered – the United States, Canada and Australia. The term Indian is also used in the US and Canadian contexts.

adoptee identification cited by Harness (2008, 68) is that of living within their indigenous homeland and therefore having an ever-present reminder of their lost access to a culture that others participate in regularly.

There are several implications for identity: indigenous transracial adoptees are less likely to have a secure base from which to explore identity issues related to race and culture (Nuttgens 2013, 6); and adoptees are likely to develop a marginal identity, in which they are aware of not being fully accepted by the white community into which they have been adopted, which may denigrate Aboriginality, and conversely, they are isolated from their Aboriginal or indigenous community (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 411). Furthermore, indigenous adoptees must deal with the contradictions of being a member of a marginalised group, despite having a socialisation, identity and role expectations of the dominant, privileged group (Sinclair 2007, 78; Wright Cardinal 2017, 119). Growing up in an environment of relative privilege can mean indigenous adoptees are singled out for criticism from indigenous communities, and experience rejection, branded as traitors, "whitewashed", "coconuts", "Johnny-come-latelys" or "white establishment...raised by white people...who wouldn't understand" (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 209, 458; Swain 2013, 213). A natural response for some adoptees is to reject adoptive or racial/ethnic/cultural identification entirely (Harness 2008, 121; Becker-Green 2009, 111), although given the significance of social assignment, avoiding these categorisations is unlikely.

The paradox of biological connection: blood is thicker than water, thinner than time[43]

Similarly to other adoptees, the theme of reconnection and reunion is prominent in indigenous transracial adoptee narratives. The desire to be reacquainted with birth family members is not universal however; a lack of concern about origins, concern that searching will upset adoptive family members, and fear of rejection may prevent a a number of adoptees from searching or tracing (Mellor and Haebich 2002, 89). For those who are reunited with birth family members, the encounter may be singular, satisfying a curiosity and nothing more, or the start of a longer-term relationship, providing closure and a "way back" (Nuttgens 2013, 9). Sometimes the reunion experience can be very negative; in Carriere's sample of 18 indigenous adoptees, ten described their birth family as "disappointing, unhealthy or dysfunctional" (Carriere 2008, 63). Sinclair (2007, 69) attributes this to being reacquainted with an historically marginalised and oppressed group, devalued and denigrated by wider

[43] Not unique to indigenous transracial adoptees, the feeling of distance and awkwardness in meeting birth family members for the first time was described by Harness (2016, 187) as "thicker than water, but thinner than time". The realisation that kinship is not guaranteed by biology but is lost to the process of adoption, was painful. This echoes Modell's (1994, 164) reference to the "thinness of a purely biological relationship".

society. This is likely to exacerbate struggles with identity (Nuttgens 2004, 185); sometimes the distance produced by adoption across cultures and between the coloniser and colonised is too great to be scaled. [44]

As Nuttgens (2013, 10) identifies, indigenous adoptees' stories of reconnection relate not only to birth family, but also members of the Aboriginal community. This is due to indigenous communities not separating family and tribe, which are regarded as one (Landers, Danes and White Hawk 2015, 20). This provides indigenous transracial adoptees an additional pathway to strengthen their indigenous identity beyond immediate family,[45] but also entails an additional requirement to meet or satisfy (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 209). It also requires further identity or cultural 'work'. Indeed, Wright Cardinal (2017, 122) considers that birth family reunions are not necessarily sufficient for achieving 'reacculturation', a deeper level of reconnection or repatriation with birth culture. Meeting indigenous people, utilising or accessing indigenous services and programmes, working in indigenous organisations, and enrolling in indigenous courses at university are some of the extra-familial means of reacculturation or reculturation cited by indigenous adoptees (Becker-Green 2009, 19; Nuttgens 2013, 10; Wright Cardinal 2017, 122), as part of embracing an indigenous identity.

From an indigenous perspective, reconnection involves more than access to birth parent details. Reconnection may take time and involve the forging of connections with homelands, stories, cultural heritage and identity, through relationships with many people (Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 312). Relationality invokes a more collective orientation, a coming to understand personhood *through* community, anchored to the land (Cajete 2000, 86). Furthermore, this sense of connectedness and relationship is a spiritual form of knowing, which cannot necessarily be explained or attained by reason and is realised in traditional ceremonies or through prayer (Wright Cardinal 2017, 83). Socialised in a Western world that privileges individualistic, autonomous selves and rational rather than spiritual subjects, the obstacles that adoptees have to overcome are ontological and epistemological (Grieves 2009, 2) as much as they are circumstantial.

By all accounts, reconnecting with indigenous communities and identity is an intensely emotional and complex endeavour for adoptees involving grief, shock and anger, and some discomfort or frustration while being introduced to an essentially foreign culture. This process is accompanied by feelings of inauthenticity and awkwardness (Wright Cardinal 2017, 124, 129). Integrating information

[44] For example, Gray (2007) talks about transracial adoptees assessing their birth culture through a Westerner's gaze, as foreigners encountering something unfamiliar and strange (82-3).
[45] From a sample of 95 First Nations adoptees, Landers et al. (2015, 25) found adoptees who reunified with wider family members and had a "high social connection" with tribe, reported a more satisfactory reunification experience.

or knowledge into self, and reconciling adoptive identity with a new (but incongruent) identity is energy-intensive, and may be marked by ebbs and flows rather than a sustained, linear commitment (Becker-Green 2009, 157; Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997, 311; Nuttgens 2013, 14).

Indigenous adoptionality - negotiating essentialism and hybridity

Interestingly, the language often used in discussions of indigenous adoptee identities (see Wright Cardinal 2017, Sinclair 2007, and Boldo 2016) connotes more essentialist understandings. Truth, certainty, reclaiming and wholeness, self- or re-discovery, "blood memory", going home – together these terms imply a return to (biological) origins and a pre-existing or innate identity waiting to be found or pieced together, rather than something created. This demonstrates the allure of essentialist notions of identity for some indigenous adoptees, similarly to other adoptees. It may be argued that essentialism is not the exclusive domain of Western knowledge, and that indigenous knowledge also invokes a certain kind of essentialism, particularly through its closeness to nature. It would seem there is a 'right' way to be indigenous (Paradies 2006, 356), as many an indigenous adoptee has found out when staking their claim as an indigenous person. Alternatively, these identity claims may be an example of strategic essentialism, the promotion of ethnic/cultural identity as authentic, homogeneous and stable in order to realise certain political and social ends (Hoskins 2012, 85-86). Just as indigenous transracial adoptees may draw upon a discourse of essential indigenous identity to counter the 'othering' hegemonic discourses that they have been subject to in the non-indigenous world, indigenous community members may draw on the same discourse to defend against the threat of the 'inauthentic other' produced by the coloniser through adoption.

Articulating a variation of the transracial adoption paradox, Harness (2008, 145) asks: "if Euro-American [group membership] boundaries are impermeable because of race, and American Indian boundaries are impermeable because of culture, where does that leave American Indian transracial adoptees?" In Harness' sample, nearly all adoptees claimed an Indian identity based on biology or blood, and many adoptees sought tribal recognition by seeking and obtaining the legally acknowledged Certificate of Indian Blood (106-108). While pursuing primordial and essential qualifiers of American Indian identity, equally, adoptees construct an identity that is neither Euro-American nor American Indian, but somewhere 'in-between' (121).

In contrast, Nuttgens' participants articulated their identity experiences in essentialist terms, but *enacted* fluid, contextual and multi-faceted identities (2013, 13). Nuttgens' participants largely avoid racial/cultural essentialism (being Aboriginal is one of many identities, central to their "story of

self" without being wholly defining), and strategic, contextual self-presentation and bicultural hybridity are the identity forms that they have found themselves occupying most comfortably and honestly given their experiences. However, they nonetheless use language suggesting the possibility of unification, integration, and completeness. Nuttgens (2013, 12) explains this seemingly paradoxical co-existence of essential and non-essential in terms of the drive to attain identity coherence.[46]

Several researchers have suggested certain steps that indigenous transracial adoptees may take to form and assume an indigenous identity, drawing from the broader indigenous identity literature. Anderson (2000, 229) considered how "Native womanhood" as a sense of identity might be 'reclaimed' and enacted. Her recommendations, applicable to indigenous transracial adoptees, include: i) developing a critical consciousness with respect to the received version of colonial history; ii) resisting colonised definitions of being or rejecting negative stereotypes; iii) reclaiming indigenous tradition, including spiritual ways of knowing; iv) constructing a positive identity by bringing tradition into the contemporary context; and v) acting on a new positive identity (Carriere 2008, 70; Wright Cardinal 2017, 84). It would be overly simplistic to interpret these steps as proceeding in a linear and categorically discreet fashion, or producing a uniform identity however (Nuttgens 2013, 14). Rather, a way of identifying that is unique to each adoptee's combination of experiences and perspectives, based on a unique cultural and identity niche, has been more widely reported (Sinclair 2007, 76).

Māori adoptee experiences and identities

As well as there being little research into Māori adoptees, there are relatively few first-person accounts of Māori legal adoption to be found in published, grey or academic literature. Similarly to Australia and North America, those writing most recently on Māori closed stranger adoption are Māori adoptees themselves, or Māori who are part of the wider adoption triad/kinship circle (Haenga-Collins 2017, 19). In seeking to explain what has happened to them and others, each of these accounts are qualitative in nature, and situate transracial adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand in the context of colonisation; they very quickly become critical and sociological. The accounts from Māori adoptees trace a similar trajectory to that outlined in other (indigenous) transracial adoptee research, highlighting the disconnection with biological heritage and the sense of difference that characterises adoptees' early lives, which is partially but never wholly addressed through searching and reunion with birth families and connection with Māori community and culture. Rather than recount the trajectory outlined in the previous section, I have reported these narratives under two key identity themes. Identity is central to

[46] See the concept of paradoxical essentialism introduced in the previous section.

each of these accounts, and particularly the inseparability of identities as Māori and as adopted people (Haenga-Collins 2011, 86; Newman 2011, 135).

Identity theme I: adoptive liminality

One of the key themes to emerge out of these research accounts is the enduring "in-betweenness" of Māori adoptees. With an apparently irresolvable liminality, Māori adoptees find themselves between worlds Māori and Pākehā worlds, and birth and adoptive families (Haenga- Collins 2011, 3). This can be experienced negatively as never quite fitting (Armstrong and Slaytor 2001, 49, 111), or more positively, as having the skills to navigate two worlds and inhabit both successfully (Haenga-Collins 2011, 72). Liminality is described in spatial terms, as either a distance or 'buffer' that can function protectively (Armstrong and Slaytor 2001, 48; West 2012, 98; Haenga-Collins 2011, 68), or a "third adoptive space" akin to limbo in which Māori adoptees negotiate their cultural and possibly hybrid identity (Newman 2011, 4).

In seeking to describe her participants' adoptive identities, Newman applied Grotevant et al's (2007) taxonomy of unexamined, limited, unsettled and integrated categories. West did not apply an adoption-specific model, choosing to apply Phinney's (1993) model of ethnic identity development and Marcia's identity statuses to her participants (unexamined, searching/moratorium, achieved).[47] Each of these models are stage-based models, employing similar concepts and terminology of ego identity, exploration, commitment and integration. Participants were found to either sit across categories, or appeared to sit in one by something that was said at one point in the interview, and then in another by something that was said later (Newman 2011, 99-100). Or, participants resembled one category in some ways but contradicted it in others (West 2012, 68, 70). The limitations of the stages models as conceptualised in a linear or prescriptive fashion are highlighted through these applications, but the fluidity and mobility of the Māori adoptee identity experience is also revealed.

Identity theme II: Māori/ethnic identity claims

Haenga-Collins, Newman and West each succeed in illuminating the demanding nature of identity construction undertaken by Māori adoptees, across intrapsychic/subjective, relational and social dimensions, as felt, internalised, ascribed and performed. What is apparent is that ethnicity/race/culture

[47] I chose not to explore ethnic or cultural identity specifically, hence I do not elaborate on these models beyond noting their use by others. The ethnic and cultural identity literature is expansive, and what I have drawn on is related more specifically to adoptees. Marcia's identity statuses build on the work of Erikson, which is drawn on in Chapter Three, through the work of adoption researchers Triseliotis, Grotevant et al. Phinney's model of ethnic identity development is also a stage-based model, spanning unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search/moratorium and ethnic identity achievement (Phinney 1993, 67).

are the sites where the majority of the Māori adoptee's identity struggles manifest. It is here that the full weight of social expectations, stereotypes and notions of essentialism and authenticity are brought to bear on the Māori adoptee, and their being is contested. This is not to disregard adoptive identity, but to note that the Māori adoptee enters the ethnicity/race/culture site *with* an adoptive identity and its associated limitations, which *intersects* their activities in or on that site.

While the constructions and positioning of Māori at the time that closed stranger adoption was introduced has been explored in Chapters One and Two, it is important to recognise that Māori adoptees have, by and large, been engaged in their 'identity work' at a time when those constructions and positioning began to change. The 1970s marked the beginning of the 'Māori renaissance', a period when Māori increasingly challenged oppressive and racist colonial assumptions and structures (Bell 2004, 80), and demanded recognition as tangata whenua, according to Māori- rather than State-defined definitions. As such, there was an expansion beyond blood quantum, to descent, ethnic and iwi affiliation, and bicultural identities. Māori identification on the basis of valued cultural distinctiveness was increasingly possible and acceptable, a departure from the stigmatised, racialised and assimilated identities of the immediate post-urbanisation[48] period.

Crucially for Māori adoptees however, this renaissance during the 1970s and 1980s occurred when some were transitioning from childhood into adolescence (Haenga-Collins 2017, 182; West 2012, 64). Not only were these attributes or competencies that they did not possess, due to their socialisation predominantly in the non-Māori world, but these expanded Māori identity criteria became crystallised and essentialised, a strategic response to the ongoing encroachment of colonialism (Bell 2004, 104, 134). While each of the new identity criteria had the possibility of being more inclusive, the reification or treatment of these as concrete, natural, static and deterministic has had exclusionary effects. Ethnicity/ethnic affiliation for example, although based on self-identification, in some quarters has become equated with a more exclusive notion of 'meaningful' participation in particular Māori networks, and cultural and linguistic competence (Kukutai 2011, 47), and operating with a certain level of proficiency and confidence in *te ao Māori* (the Māori world). Socialised in predominantly Pākehā worlds, Māori adoptees are compromised in their abilities to 'perform' this cultural identity.

Many Māori adoptees, beyond being able to claim Māori 'blood' or descent from one or both birth parents, have been unable to access and specify their whakapapa. This sees them excluded from participation in iwi communities and compromised in practices such as *mihimihi* (greetings, personal introductions). The fundamental importance of whakapapa to recognition and personhood in Māori

[48] In the 1940s growth in rural areas was slowing and there were limited employment prospects for young Māori. A growing demand for labour in the towns and cities led to a post-World War II wave of Māori migration to urban areas ("urbanisation").

society has seen Māori adoptees significantly disadvantaged and compromised in their efforts to claim Māori identity[49] (Haenga-Collins 2011, 89; Haenga-Collins 2017, 140, 179-180; Newman 2011, 168; West 2012, 18). This point may be challenged on the basis that whakapapa is inalienable; it can never be lost because the *ira tangata* (the biological base, human genes) remains embodied within the individual (Mead 2003, 42-44). However, this does not change how relationships and connections that emerge from that biological base cannot be invoked, if the birth parent and their whakapapa remain unknown.

Sadly, the 'work' that adoptees anticipate whakapapa will do for them once known, is not always born out in reality. Where adoptees have been able to access information about their whakapapa and reconnect with whānau, there remains the problem of their socialisation outside of te ao Māori. Of course, this is only a problem where Māori identity is conceptualised as a simple and direct correspondence between inherited substance and cultural being (West 2012, 21), or lived experience deemed more authentic than learned experiences (Haenga Collins 2011, 88). This is reminiscent of the dichotomy between 'roots' and 'routes', the 'authentic' origins of peoples and cultures versus mobility and change (Gilroy 1993, 19). The dichotomy for Maori is that of "real/being Māori versus becoming Māori" (Bell 2004, 94), and by implication, to be authentically Māori is to have *always* been, pre-existing, primordial and unchanging.[50]

A further consequence of the Māori renaissance and the emergence of biculturalism was the increased polarisation of Māori and Pākehā identities (Bell 2004, 80; West 2012, 111). This division complicated ethnic/cultural identification for Māori adoptees, who expressed their struggle to 'fit in' either of these binary positions (Haenga Collins 2017, 136-7, 176), on the basis of their dispersed personhood, distributed (or fragmented) across separate biological and social domains. Determining which is the more 'real', 'authentic' or permissible involves taking account of the perceptions and expectations of others, a taxing process. If we take post-colonial notions of adoptive being and ethnic plurality/hybridity into consideration, these identity decisions may well be an unsatisfactory both/and.

Thus, central to these Māori identity negotiations are the perceptions of others. As West (2012, 78, 63) notes, Māori adoptees are compromised in their belonging to the exclusive group (Māori/Pākehā) by virtue of their lack of situated genetic history, cultural knowledge and lived

[49] This point features prominently in Māori adoptee experiences, and is dealt with extensively in each of the pieces of work reviewed here.

[50] Bell (2004, 146) suggests that recognising the validity of 'becoming' Māori as well as being Māori, registers the break of colonisation, and the "ruptures and discontinuities" that constitute contemporary Māori identity (drawing on Hall 1990, 225). This would appear to be particularly pertinent to Māori adoptee identity, where recognising the validity and legitimacy of Māori adoptees 'becoming Māori' (i.e. through learning *te reo and tikanga Māori:* Māori language and customs/traditions) would thereby also recognise/acknowledge the ruptures and discontinuities caused by closed stranger adoption.

experience as Māori. The resulting cultural shame (*whakamā*) is a social emotion derived from the adoptee's acute awareness that they fall well short of the cultural or 'ought self', or might be judged as fraudulent or inauthentic (Newman 2011, 123, 135-6). These experiences are not the exclusive domain of Māori adoptees; they are shared by a wider group of Māori (Haenga Collins 2017, 184; McBreen 2011), affirming that these problems of identity politics originate somewhat beyond the immediacy of closed adoption. For Māori adoptees, *transracial* adoption is an additional colonising layer, focusing, distorting, amplifying, and sometimes obscuring what was already at work. However, not being spoken of or recognised within Māori identity discourse reflects and reproduces Māori adoptees' as irrelevant, and excludes them from any post-renaissance benefits (West 2012, 4, 64; Haenga Collins 2011, 76).

A significant distinction to emerge from the stories of Māori adoptees in Haenga Collins (2011, 2017), West (2012) and Newman's (2011) work is *choice/agency* and/or *constraint/imposition*. A common trajectory of Māori adoptee identity begins with a position of limited agency, certain key constraints (socialisation within adoptive family, not knowing whakapapa) and then active attempts (or not) to transcend or overcome these. Although Māori adoptees do not choose to be Māori by fact of their descent, they do get to choose whether they identify as being of Māori ethnicity, and it is clear from the research to date that not all adoptees feel they reach a position where they can comfortably and legitimately do so. Adoptees' deliberations regarding identification correspond to a number of dimensions of the Multi-dimensional Model of Maori Identity and Cultural Engagement 2 (MMM-ICE2) framework[51] developed by Houkamau and Sibley (2015), which I apply below.

Authenticity beliefs

Whether adoptees feel able to identify as Māori is influenced considerably by the expectations of others – not only being seen to possess certain attributes or markers, but also that there is some alignment or semblance between physical/biological and cultural markers, a racial and cultural determinism. A number of adoptees have internalised these expectations deeply, and thus not meeting these racial/ethnic/cultural expectations is particularly salient, perhaps experienced more negatively and profoundly by those who believe that being 'truly' Māori and 'truly' themselves requires these

[51] The MMM-ICE was developed by Houkamau and Sibley (2010, 8), found to provide a culturally sensitive, valid and reliable self-report measure of subject identification as Māori. The instrument assesses six dimensions: Group Membership Evaluation, Socio-Political Consciousness, Cultural Efficacy and Active Identity Engagement, Spirituality, Interdependent Self-Concept, and Authenticity Beliefs. These dimensions are subsumed under more general factors representing 1) Self-Identification and Cultural Engagement in Socio-Political Context; 2) Enculturated Experiences of Māori Identity Traditions; and 3) Constitutive Representations of 'Being' Māori. An update in 2015 saw the addition of Perceived Appearance and the development of the MMM-ICE2 (Houkamau and Sibley 2015). In the analysis presented here I have discussed Perceived Appearance in relation to the other dimensions rather than separately.

prescribed markers (West 2012, 98). In this case, participants who adhered to the notion of there being specific features, knowledge and behaviour associated with an 'authentic Māori' (Houkamau and Sibley 2010, 21) tended to think of themselves as 'lacking' in terms of their Māori-ness, either propelling them towards action, or inertia.

Some adoptees found biological/cultural hybridity a comfortable fit – enabling them to remain 'true' to their biological and social selves, but also qualifying their difference from an 'authentic' Māori-ness. These individuals would claim biological Māori-ness (race or descent) going by their physical appearance, but 'New Zealander/Māori New Zealander' if prompted to answer details about their unknown whakapapa (Newman 2011, 131). An identification of 'part-Māori' and 'part-European' accommodated their looking Māori but without specifiable whakapapa, and with a Pākehā upbringing. In contrast, for one of Haenga Collins' fair-skinned participants, the pressure of having to choose, fit into or reflect an ethnic identity was a burdensome constraint. In this respect, she found living abroad for several years liberating, not being read as Māori or Pākehā, but as a person (Haenga Collins 2017, 136-7), thereby suspending or avoiding any ethnic identification.

Cultural efficacy and active identity expression

For some Māori adoptees, not looking Māori prompted them to find other ways to support their identification as Māori. McBreen (2011, n.p) describes being "often read as Pākehā" and the implications of having an "uncertain" ethnic identity: "many of us who feel as if we fail on a crucial signifier, such as skin colour, try to compensate by excelling at another. For example…fluency in te reo Māori…" Knowing te reo Māori may counteract or "equalize" a fair appearance for instance, a means by which to legitimise Māori ethnic status (West 2012, 41).

It is evident that many Māori adoptees desire recognition as Māori (Haenga Collins 2017, 182), but distinguish between being ascribed as Māori by Pākehā, and 'truly' validated and accepted by Māori (West 2012, 53). Some adoptees acknowledged that this entails a level of commitment and knowledge before being "fully" identified (West 2012, 71). This implies action, and therefore a level of agency. There were a number of references to agency expressed by Māori adoptees throughout the research findings reviewed, most commonly as a means to provide those things that they are lacking as a result of adoption. Examples included making specific life choices such as choosing a Māori partner, or searching for birth whānau (Armstrong and Slaytor 2001, 44-50), "building" a history for self and children (Haenga Collins 2011, 50) or liberating oneself from a sense of victimhood (Haenga Collins 2017, 140).

Group membership evaluation

Where looking Māori led some adoptees to accept that they are Māori (Newman 2011, 172), some visibly Māori adoptees exercised agency by opting not to identify as such. Being judged and rejected by Māori had a significant bearing on these adoptees' aversion to being labelled or categorised as Māori. However, it was also the case that they did not deem their Māori ethnic identity as particularly important to their "core identity", and they did not characterise their adoption experience as one of cultural loss (West 2012, 42-3, 81, 120). For these adoptees, their subjective evaluation of their Māori social group membership in negative terms (Houkamau and Sibley 2010, 20) played a major role in their identification choices.

Amidst participants' diverse backgrounds and varied life choices and events, the correlation most consistently observed was between adoptees' internal commitment and their ethnic identity choices, irrespective of the cultural orientation of their upbringings. That is, where adoptees were personally committed to a Māori identity, they were more likely to identify as Māori, even where their pathways to this personal commitment varied. Indeed, how this internal commitment evolved was noted to be complex and diverse, reflecting experiences subject to individual interpretation (West 2012, 76, 92).

Spirituality

Similarly to indigenous adoptees in other settler nations, a narrative of primordialism was apparent in research into Māori adoptees' discussions of their ethnic identification. While this may indeed reflect a 'real' feeling or sense, primordialism can also serve a 'naturalising' or legitimising function, minimising the appearance of 'choice' while justifying identification as Māori. Some adoptees reported being drawn to Māori people and culture, in some cases before they knew they were Māori (Haenga Collins 2011, 84; West 2012, 51; Haenga Collins 2017, 139). Others described their sense of spiritual connection in spite of limited knowledge of whakapapa, including a 'pull' to tribal and ancestral homeland (Armstrong and Slaytor 2001, 44), or the guiding force of *wairua* (spirit) and *tūpuna* ((ancestors) Haenga Collins 2011, 84). Given the supremacy of wairua and spiritual connection in te ao Māori, having such a sense holds considerable weight, and as Haenga Collins (2011, 84) notes, provides a narrative of repair, of having always belonged. Ethnic identification on the basis of some form of 'knowing' implies reclamation or reawakening, an exercise in re-construction that is preferable to wholesale construction, which might carry connotations of 'fabrication'.

Interdependent self-concept and socio-political consciousness

Given the significance of whakapapa as the "lynchpin of Māori identity" (Kukutai 2004, 101), for those who were without this knowledge, they actively sought other means of continuity and connection. In some cases this was realised with the birth of biological children (Haenga Collins 2011, 64). Alternatively, "narratives of whakapapa *tauiwi*,"[52] either that of their Pākehā birth mothers, or their adoptive families, sometimes provided that sense of belonging (Haenga Collins 2011, 77-79). For those who were able to trace their whakapapa, they sometimes positioned themselves in their whānau and te ao Māori *through* their children. This helped the adoptee to mitigate their tenuous position, 'normalised' their whānau involvement, and ensured that their children will not experience the same losses of knowledge or participation (Haenga Collins 2011, 79-80). A further narrative evident in Haenga Collins' participants' accounts was that of "being Māori as a given right", invoking something of a socio-political consciousness relating to the salience of being Māori (Houkamau and Sibley 2010, 21). This narrative constituted a form of self-permission, justifying adoptees searching and reclaiming, and also resisting a colonised identity (Haenga Collins 2011, 81-2).

Summary

It is clear from research to date that Māori adoptees struggle with the hegemony of biological essentialism and kinship. The 'pull' and power of biological essentialism is evident in the "burning" need to know whakapapa and for physical resemblance;[53] natural, authentic and indisputable forms of belonging. However, when Māori adoptees enter the Māori ethnic identity site, a site replete with essentialist pressures, primordial references feature less frequently than would perhaps be expected. Māori adoptees are well aware of their difference and distance in this space, of their need to learn, construct and create if they are to achieve a Māori identity. Thus, a more fluid identity form is inescapable, embraced fully by some adoptees.

In terms of approach, the work undertaken so far ranges from a more open exploration of Māori adoptee narratives (Haenga Collins 2011; 2017), to more focused discipline-specific investigations of specific notions of identity (West 2012; Newman 2011). In the latter studies, a determination has been made that ethnic/social identity and adoptive identity/ethnic identity are the sites/forms that Māori adoptees are engaged in. While this does indeed appear to be the case, and some rich data have resulted,

[52] Foreigner, European, non-Māori (maoridictionary.co.nz)

[53] Physical resemblance is a powerful indicator to many adoptees that they belong, the physical likeness means that they come from somewhere/someone, and they are therefore not alone. Haenga-Collins (2011, 63) names this "the physicality of belonging", which she links to western essentialist notions, presumably of biological kinship and identity. In fact, where there is not resemblance, adoptees report unease (Haenga-Collins 2017, 145).

the application of identity statuses, categories and measures was ultimately less successful. Rather than presuppose or assume any particular form of identity (i.e. personal, social, ethnic, cultural, adoptive), I postulate that it is fruitful to 'listen' for identity in the narratives of Māori adoptees, what is 'real' for them and how this corresponds with nature and culture, biological and social domains, essentialism and constructionism. What these narrativised experiences then say about identity as a construct, may be able to move us beyond the "state of intellectual exhaustion" that appears to have been reached in the theorisation of identity (Bell 2004, 26).

A clear link between the experience of adoption and identity development has been forged in psychological and microsociological literature in past decades. This research has yielded a comprehensive understanding of intrapsychic and relational dimensions of adoptive identity formation, as well as the key challenges and trajectories. Adding to this knowledge, social constructionist and 'post-' research has elucidated the discursive underpinnings of the institution and practice of adoption, the reproduction of these discourses in the lives of adoptees, and the impact on their experiences and identities.

The unique implications for transracial adoptees have focused on the interrelations of personal and social identities, adoptive and ethnic/racial/cultural identities. The situatedness of transracial adoptees at the intersection of powerful authenticity discourses and the resulting binary oppositions, is apparent – *between* birth and adoptive families, majority and minority ethnic communities, coloniser and colonised, biological and social, 'natural' and 'cultural' designations. That transracial adoptees find themselves as the "outsider within" (Hill Collins 1999, 86) in both adoptive and racial/ethnic/cultural birth communities, is evidence of the policing of difference alive and well in both colonised and colonising contexts, albeit for different purposes.

However, constraint is only one part of the transracial adoptive identity equation. Transracial adoptees also exercise agency, making choices regarding their identification or non-identification, navigating discourses and subjectivities in nuanced ways. Thus, investigating these assigned and chosen elements of identity provides insight into associated social and individual meanings, their co-constitutive action, and thence, the interaction between identity, agency and structure (Patton 2000, 2).

Increasingly critical and complex accounts based on transracial adoptee narratives have promulgated a much more interesting positionality than acceptance or rejection of authenticity. A position of "both/and", constructed and essentialist, fluid and grounded, simultaneous being and becoming, has the potential to resist and transform hegemonic discourses from either side or end (Wills 2016, 218). Post-positivist realism, with its embrace of the discursive, social and material as all 'real', provides a fitting base for this type of inquiry.

Studies focused specifically on Māori adoptees are relatively small in number, but have provided a promising foundation for further research. With a kaupapa Māori[54] orientation, these studies have identified the colonial origins of Māori adoptees' identity challenges, and with a strengths-focus, the diverse accounts of identity work/formation in dynamic circumstances. However, owing to the infancy of this field, the story that has been told focuses significantly on the earlier parts of the identity trajectory, leaving room for this research to extend it further forward.

[54] "For Māori, by Māori, with Māori" – see next chapter for a detailed discussion of kaupapa Māori.

Chapter Five:
Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her seminal publication on Kaupapa Māori methodology (1999a, 173), should match "the problem with an appropriate set of investigative strategies". Of course, this is contingent on *how* the research is conceptualised, and therefore what might be conceived as appropriate. The unit or extent of matching – methodology or method – is also subject to debate. In much the same way, Crotty (1998, 13-14) suggests that rather than a methodology being adopted holus-bolus, "every piece of research is unique and calls for a unique methodology", and therefore the role of researchers is to develop a methodology to fit the research aims. In the context of this study, the phenomena of adoption, and identity specifically in relation to the adoptive experience, form the basis of the research questions and the methodological considerations. They in turn informed the decisions of how to explore Māori adoptee identities.

A post-positivist realist theory of Māori adoptee identity was proposed in Chapter Two, for its ability to accommodate Māori adoptees' realities at the nexus of structure and agency, discourse and substance, essentialism and social constructionism. As a social and legal institution that shapes family formation (Haslanger and Witt 2005, 1) in a post-colonial[55] context, adoption positions the Māori adoptee structurally and discursively, thereby affecting personal experiences and identification. Identities then, are mediating constructs, between the Māori adoptee's 'reality' and their experience of that reality. From these ontological and epistemological parameters, weaving together a design that reflected both theoretical and philosophical coherence became the challenge (see Barnes, Caddick, Clarke, Cromby, McDermott, Willis and Wiltshire 2014). Accordingly, a "bricolage"[56] (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 4, 246) of critical realism, kaupapa Māori and Ricoeurian hermeneutic phenomenology was chosen and this bricolage is outlined in the following sections.

[55] Here I am referring to the constitutional status of Aotearoa New Zealand as a *former* British colony. Colonialism in its most overt form has ended, hence the appropriateness of the term 'post-colonial'. Furthermore, the prefix 'post' can refer to a framework for use to move beyond imperialist colonial models (Mahuika 2015, 41). However, the use of this term does not deny that Māori continue to live with the colonial 'residue' – Pākehā settler rule and the consequences of colonisation.

[56] Bricolage: construction or creation from a diverse range of available things (Oxford Dictionary).

Theoretical framework: critical realism and kaupapa Māori

Critical realism, as a variant of post-positivist realism, is a fitting theoretical framework for this research. Critical realism argues for the co-existence of worldly dimensions independent of human consciousness, *and* dimensions that correspond to human knowledge, or are socially constructed (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson 2005, 16; Marotta and Muraca 2017, 236). These dimensions are deemed to be equally real owing to their causal efficacy, and are configured in a stratified ontology comprised of i) an empirical domain: human sensory experiences, perceptions and interpretations of events; ii) an 'actual' domain: the events and actions themselves, whether or not they are experienced or observed; and iii) a 'real' domain: 'deep' structures and mechanisms that exist and generate phenomena independent of human activity (transcendental realism: Bhaskar and Lawson, 1998, 5-6). These domains may include: the materially real – the natural environment; the artefactually real – the built environment and manufactured items; the ideally real – discourse, language, signs, symbols, ideas, beliefs, explanations, concepts, models and theories; and the socially real – organisations, class or gender structures, institutions, norms, rules, conventions (Fleetwood 2014, 193, 204).

The layered conceptualisation at the heart of critical realism accommodates the discursive as well as the extra-discursive, rebutting the notion that discourses on their own can be wholly constitutive, while arguing for their real effects via the actions of agents and material factors[57]. Critical realism thereby embraces a weak form of social constructionism, invested in studying the reality of social structures "without becoming committed to an excessively relativist or totally constructivist ontology" (Olsen 2010, xxi). More specifically, discourses afford particular meanings, which are accommodated by and within social structures, experienced as life conditions that are acted upon (accepted or changed) by human actors (Willig 1999, 44). With this view, critical realism supports a more holistic exploration of complex, multi-dimensional phenomena (Walsh and Evans 2014, e1; Colahan, Tunariu and Dell 2012, 50). Providing ontic depth[58], the relationships between individuals, events, settings and processes can be drawn from prior theory and research as well as experiential knowledge, which informs a conceptual framework of the phenomena at hand (Maxwell 2012, 85-6).

In this research, it is also necessary to engage methodologically with Māori realities; that is, with a focus on Māori. It is imperative that this research acknowledges the social positioning of Māori adoptees, as well as Māori worldviews and ways of knowing. One way to achieve this is through *kaupapa Māori* research (KMR) methodology, which has social change/transformation as well as

[57] For example, the body and embodiment: Sayer 2000, 41

[58] Ontic depth refers to a view of the world that is multi-layered, complex, and allows for dynamic interaction and interrelationship of the component parts (Olsen 2010, xxi)

Māori development goals (Eketone 2008, 7). Part of a wider decolonisation movement, kaupapa Māori seeks to challenge the status quo through the provision of critique, as well as to reclaim space for Māori voices and legitimise and affirm Māori knowledge, values and processes (Cram 2003, 4; Pihama, Cram and Walker 2002, 32; Smith 1999b, 3; Smith 2005, 89). The phrase "for Māori, by Māori, with Māori" emphasises the way in which it is an "insider" methodology, utilising culturally relevant and rigorous practice (Irwin 1994, 27; Smith 1997, 137; Smith 1999b, 1).

Kaupapa are principles, values and philosophies which act as a base or foundation for action, in the form of *tikanga* – particular methods, processes or policies that uphold or enact those kaupapa (Royal 2000, 1). Both are derived from a Māori worldview, and constitute the "bedrock" of Māori culture and society (Winiata, n.d., 5). Therefore, operationalising kaupapa Māori in research encompasses both a general orientation toward the betterment of Māori *through* research, as well as adherence to specific practices and processes in order to do so. A set of cultural values articulated originally by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999a), then subsequently developed into guidelines for researchers by Fiona Cram (2001), have been aggregated into broader constructs by Jones, Ingham, Davies and Cram (2010). In their Whānau Tuatahi (Family First) framework, Jones et al. (2010, 5/14) illustrate how Māori cultural values may be upheld through kaupapa Māori oriented research processes. These processes will be followed in this research to ensure that the *mana* (status) of Māori adoptees is upheld throughout, and that the research contributes towards positive outcomes for them, in a way that is *tika* (correct, right according to Māori principles and values). Table 2 (next page) amalgamates two tables. The first table constitutes the first two columns, in which a "community up approach to defining researcher conduct" is outlined, put forth by Smith (2005, 98), consisting of the principles she developed and the derivative guidelines developed by Cram. The second table constitutes the third column, consisting of the content from the "Whānau Tuatahi" framework developed by Jones et al. (2010; Jones, Ingham, Cram, Dean and Davies 2013).

Table 2: Kaupapa Māori values and guidelines applied in two community-oriented research frameworks. Sources: Smith 2005, 98; Jones et al 2010, 2013

'Community up' approach to defining researcher conduct (Smith: Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 98)		**Whānau Tuatahi framework** (Jones et al 2010, 2013)
Cultural values (Smith 1999a, 120)	**Researcher guidelines** (adapted from Cram 2001, 42-50)	
Aroha ki te tangata – a respect for people	Allow people to define their own space and meet on their own terms.	Whakawhirinaki: trust Establishing a connection with the community, proving trustworthiness and reliability. Partnering with local provider. Involving kaumātua in research oversight.
He kanohi kitea – the seen face	Meet people face to face, especially when introducing the idea of the research, and 'front up' to the community before sending out materials.	
Titiro, whakarongo…kōrero Look, listen…speak	Look/observing and listen in order to develop understandings and find a place from which to speak.	Whakawhanaungatanga: building relationships Successive engagements with whānau, mutual sharing of personal information
Manaaki ki te tangata – sharing, hosting, being generous	Adopt a collaborative approach to research, one that enables knowledge to flow both ways and in which the researcher is also a learner. Facilitate the process of 'giving back', of sharing results, and of bringing closure if that is required for a project, but not to a relationship.	Utu: reciprocity Kia ngākau māhaki (be humble in your approach) Provision of koha, recognition of whānau research contributions, offering of information, advocating for whānau Waiting to be invited to share knowledge, providing information where useful
Kaua e māhaki – do not flaunt your knowledge	Find ways to share and be generous with knowledge without being arrogant. Sharing knowledge is about empowering a process, but the community has to empower itself.	
Kia tūpato – be cautious	Researchers need to be politically astute, culturally safe, and reflective about their insider/outsider status.	Hurihuringa: reflexivity Constant evaluation of research protocols and their impact, drawing on tikanga support/advice
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata – do not trample on the mana or dignity of a person	Inform people and guard against being paternalistic or impatient because people do not know what you as the researcher may know. Be mindful of your conduct in the field.	Whakamana: empowerment + tino rangatiratanga Ngāwari: flexibility Giving whānau control over participation in research; 'mana' enhancing enquiry

Hermeneutic phenomenology

With similar notions of the inevitability of interpretation, *and* the extra- or non-discursive and embodied qualities of subjective experience (Cohen and Omery 1994, 149; Laverty 2003, 24), there is an alignment between critical realism and hermeneutic phenomenology (Sayer 2000, 17-18; Price and Martin 2018, 92). Furthermore, building representations of the causal 'real' as part of critical realism requires thick description, and therefore, hermeneutic information (Fleetwood 2014, 209).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Heidegger, and later Gadamer and Ricoeur, who all drew upon but departed from the descriptive phenomenology of Husserl (Laverty 2003, 24; Moran 2002, 17-19). Heidegger's primary interest was to explore the meaning of Being, that is, human beings' existence in and not separate from the world (Being-in-the-world). This was done by understanding lived experiences of specific phenomena; the world as lived and experienced subjectively by a person (Cohen and Omery 1994, 140; Laverty 2003, 24). According to Gadamer (2013, 56), the German term for lived experience, *er-lebnis*, encompasses "what personally and immediately one experiences for oneself", as well as "its discovering yield, its lasting residue", namely the significance, meaning and interpretation attributed to those experiences (Burch 1990, 132-3).

Heidegger posited that experiences are interpreted according to an inherited set of meanings. The ways of understanding 'Being-in-the-world' (*Dasein*) are presented or passed down through socialisation in the form of pre-understanding or fore-structures of understanding. Problematically however, Heidegger was dismissive of culturally derived meanings, regarding these as imposed by 'das Man' rather than an authentic part of the phenomenology of human situatedness (Crotty 1998, 97). His focus on individual agency was more constructivist (knowledge is constructed through human activities) and anthropocentric (Brinkmann 2018, 43, 70, 76). Both of these assumptions are troubling from a Māori perspective, which embraces a collective orientation (akin to being-with-others: Wright-St Clair 2009, 1) and in which history, culture and traditions are highly valued.

A more suitable account of hermeneutic phenomenology is that of Ricoeur's cultural hermeneutics, which acknowledges culture as "a received heritage", transmitted by tradition, a source of symbols, stories and meanings in which the individual is embedded (Ricoeur 1973, 153; Helenius 2013, 26), and against and through which their 'selfhood' and self-identity develops (Ricoeur 1991, 30; Adams 2015, 140-1; Tan, Wilson and Olver 2009, 6/15). The explicit acknowledgement of culture and tradition in conjunction with self-identity lends Ricoeur's approach ideally to the research focus on Māori adoptee identities, for whom negotiation of a 'cultural' identity and belonging to a minority ethnicity/culture is fundamental. Furthermore, Ricoeur's recognition of the primacy of ideology and the symbolic institution of society (Adams 2015, 145) makes room for exploration of the discourses

surrounding and underpinning closed stranger adoption, and the ways in which adoptees are constructed (see Chapter Two).

Hermeneutic phenomenology and the narrative turn

The 'narrative turn' in hermeneutics saw a shift from the study of the fictive, literary, textual and linguistic toward narrative as a universal practice of human communication and as a way to make sense of the world (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 3). Ricoeur drew from Heidegger's assertions about the temporal nature of Being-in-the-world, studying the relationship between time and narrative (1984, 1985, 1988). Narrative was treated as an important form of linguistic communication, in which all understanding of the world is embedded (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 8).

To Ricoeur, narratives operated at several levels: macro, micro, ontological and epistemological. First, individuals are situated in time and context, history and culture, through which narratives are shared and inherited (Ricoeur 1973, 154). Second, through experiencing and interpreting, individuals form a narrative understanding of their own subjectivity in the world, in reference to other selves present in culture, and recognition by "the other-than-the-self" (Helenius 2013, 151). Ricoeur also thought of narratives as having ontological merit, in that they reflect (and constitute) the narrative nature of human action, experience, and therefore, human reality (Ricoeur 1984, 53-4; Ricoeur 1991, 27-29). Lastly, narratives were said to possess epistemic value in that they provide a structure that makes reality more tangible and intelligible (Ritivoi 2005, 231).

One of Ricoeur's main contributions to hermeneutic phenomenology was a *theory of interpretation*, to be used in conjunction with phenomenology in order to 'properly' study human reality (Pellauer and Dauenhauer 2016, n.p). For Ricoeur narrative rather than lived experience is the means by which phenomena and Dasein ought to be explored, the more appropriate focus of inquiry (Finlay 2009, 9). Language, discourse and text are at the centre of Ricoeur's theory: language expressing or verbalising lived experience; discourse extending the meaning of language through the use of sign systems (for instance, metaphor, narrative); and text as discourse fixed in writing, which might project a particular 'world', and mediate self-understanding (Geanellos 2000, 113; Tan et al. 2009, 7/15).

Connections between critical realism, kaupapa Māori and hermeneutic phenomenology

Critical realism and Kaupapa Māori

The conceptualisation of a stratified reality comprised of objective and constructed elements means that indigenous subject positions beyond the binary of authentic and essential/inauthentic hybrid are also accorded epistemic value or validity (Teuton 2008, 32-3). Critical realism thereby offers emancipatory potential, similarly to the critical theory-oriented element of kaupapa Māori, based on Freirean notions of conscientisation and praxis (Smith 1997, 98). Indeed, an emphasis on social transformation is shared between critical realism and kaupapa Māori (Houston 2001, 846; Sayer 2000, 19; Fitzsimons and Smith 2000, 26).

Love (1999, 331) names Māori "long-time post-positivists" for their recognition and respect of the realities of whānau, hapū and iwi, even if different from their own: "our truth is our truth, their truth is their truth; it is not for one group to tell another form of 'correct' story". Being genealogically bound to a material reality in the form of the natural environment, a specific place of sustenance and belonging in or from which knowledge and traditions are constructed, lends indigenous people towards an understanding of a grounded but mediated reality. For Cherokee scholar Teuton (2008, 32-33), realism provides the means for articulating and sharing a tribal epistemology. Such a "tribal realism" corresponds to the constructivist underpinnings of kaupapa Māori theory, which accord Māori the right to make sense of their place in time and space without reference to non-Māori people or concepts (Russell 2000, 10; Eketone 2008, 7).

Critical realism and hermeneutic phenomenology

There are a number of parallels between critical realism and Ricoeurian hermeneutic phenomenology, beginning with the notion that human understanding is mediated through sociocultural circumstances, history and language (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 8). Experience and interpretation are central to both philosophies, although there is some difference in the consideration of narrative, and its relationship to reality. For critical realists, narratives are products of individuals' experiences and actions in relation to discursive and extra-discursive realities, a means of interpretation and communication (Silver 2013, 143, 154). Narratives are *also* stories and discursive traditions that are told, as well as instruments employed to convey, realise and reproduce certain rules and meanings (Harre and Bhaskar 2001, 37, 23). Critical theorists draw upon hermeneutic concepts such as that of

the hermeneutic horizon[59] to explain the connection between the two (for example, Alcoff 2010, 159). However, because experience is subject to interpretation and the perceiver's conceptual frameworks (Olsen 2010, xxiv), narratives are perceived as a second-order mediation of reality, and not a direct representation or reflection (mimetic). Further interpretation is required to access the causal mechanisms that may produce reality (Lin 2012, 88-9). Critical realists posit that studying how narratives work, their effects, and their meaning to different observers may enable the exploration of the roles narrative play in real structures and institutions (Olsen 2010, xxx), as well as what those real structures and institutions are.

Similarly to the critique of radical social constructivism (Fletcher 2017, 182), critical realists challenge hermeneutic assumptions that society is "only like a text" (Sayer 2000, 143). While Sayer (2000, 149) concedes that narrative structures have a significant influence upon how we represent and interpret knowledge, this is not an acceptance of narrative as an "ontological carrier" of an already narrativised reality (Ritivoi 2005, 233). People, as actors or agents must feature in any account lest the "ontological mistake" of depending on concepts such as narrative to be agential, is committed (Olsen 2010, xxi).

Finally, a branch of critical hermeneutics exists that addresses dimensions of power which are overlooked in hermeneutic phenomenology (Kinsella 2006, n.p). Critical hermeneutics considers interpretation as subject to socially accepted or dominant ways of viewing reality, including ideological uses of language. That some worldviews are privileged over others means that the experiences of non-privileged groups, such as indigenous peoples, are likely to be discounted. It is the role of critical hermeneutic inquiry therefore to give space to the voices of marginalised individuals as *interpreters*, and for their "neglected texts" to be read (Lopez and Willis 2004, 730; Schott 1991, and Kearney 1988, cited in Kinsella 2006, n.p). The historical bases of dominant ideologies and their role in shaping the lives, and masking, ignoring or trivialising the realities of participants must be critiqued (Lopez and Willis 2004, 731). Without following critical hermeneutics specifically, the critical potential of Ricoeurian hermeneutic phenomenology is explored in the next section, specifically, application of a hermeneutics of suspicion within the analysis of participants' narratives.

[59] The hermeneutic horizon is taken from Gadamer (2013, 313-317), who thought of interpretation and understanding as the fusion of our past and present horizons. Ricoeur (1984, 76-7) used the concept of horizon to describe the interaction between the reader and a text, the text opening up possible experience to the reader as if it were the actual world of the reader (a textual horizon). See also Ricoeur 1991, 26.

Kaupapa Māori and hermeneutic phenomenology

KMR methodology is often utilised in conjunction with other approaches, in order to realise benefits for Māori across a range of disciplinary fields and research issues (Moewaka Barnes 2000, 5-6; Ahuriri-Driscoll et al. 2007, 62). KMR has been applied using both quantitative and qualitative methods, "drawn on appropriately and creatively" so that they align with its intents and purposes (Jones, Ingham, Cram, Dean and Davies 2013, 3; Smith 2005, 88). Only a small number of studies have combined kaupapa Māori and hermeneutic phenomenology,[60] although there are studies solely from a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that include Māori participants (for instance, Wright-St Clair 2009). In comparison, narrative methods are more widely utilised in KMR.

Not surprisingly, the starting point for use of hermeneutic phenomenology among Māori researchers is an interest in direct experience rather than objective knowledge, and also a sense that a phenomenological view of the world bears similarity to and is compatible with Māori perspectives. Stewart-Harawira (2005, 46), for instance, suggests that the concepts and understandings that hermeneutic epistemology articulates have always existed in indigenous epistemological and ontological thinking.

Several parallels are outlined by a number of writers, which are also consistent with the tenets of critical realism. Firstly, 'being-in-the-world' is relational[61] and inclusive of a material, primordial reality, upon which "ever developing layers of meaning" in the form of whakapapa, are constructed (Roberts and Wills 1998, 50; Royal 2009, 80-83). Whakapapa defines (familial) relationships between individuals, and also serves as an ontological framework – the "ultimate catalogue" of all creatures, things and even events (Hudson, Ahuriri-Driscoll, Lea and Lea 2007, 43; Royal 2009, 70). Whakapapa may thereby constitute a means of inquiry into Being, as well as constituting 'being-in-the-world' (Mika 2014, 53). Interconnectedness and relationship implies 'the indivisibility of human kind and the natural world' and the subsequent unity of object and subject. This gives rise to a participatory epistemology in which holistic ways of knowing that extend beyond rationality and logic are embraced, including spirituality, embodied, internal knowing and lived experience (Royal 2009, 114). Subjective experience (inclusive of interpretation) is a legitimate source of understanding (*māramatanga*), and indeed forms the basis for the objective explanation of the world (Cajete 2004, 45; Hornsby n.d.). Tradition, culture and collective are inherited but also negotiated by the individual,

[60] De Thierry 2013, McDonald 2011, Valentine 2009, Hollis 2013, Jones et al. 2010, 2013, Macfarlane 2016, Harris, Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Jolly 2016

[61] Building on the notion of co-constitutionality, according to Heidegger being-in-the-world is always a mode of 'being-with-others', possessing a relational quality (Wright-St Clair 2009, 3).

a critical part of the hermeneutic circle[62] in informing one's historical horizons (Burkhart 2004, 25-6). The compatibility of hermeneutic phenomenology with KMR is thus evident at the philosophical level, the conceptual level and also the level of methods: see Table 3 below.

Table 3: Commonalities between hermeneutic phenomenology and KMR

	Hermeneutic phenomenology	**Kaupapa Māori**
Philosophy/ ontology	Interconnection Holism	
	Being-in-the-world Co-constitutionality	Being-with-others; whakapapa Manaakitanga/utu
Epistemology	Experience Subjectivity Participatory epistemology	
	Understanding	Māramatanga
Methodology & methods	Stories/narratives Reflexivity	Pūrākau, kōrero Kia tūpato/hurihuringa
	Interpretation according to participants' contexts and constructs	

There are differences in degree and of the importance accorded to relationality, collectivism and consideration of structural influences. However, these are not insurmountable and it is proposed that by employing both approaches, the spaces left by one approach will be filled by the other, and vice versa. For example, where hermeneutic phenomenology might focus on how Māori adoptees construct themselves and their individual experiences of being Māori and being adopted, KMR is more likely attend to the societal contexts and discourses that promulgate particular constructions of Māori adoptees. Akin to critical hermeneutics, the very emphasis on meaning and listening to "the things themselves" in phenomenological method challenges hegemonic rationalistic translations. Because a phenomenological approach centres the concerns and worldviews of participants, Mika (2015, 100) suggests that its use by and with Māori enables Māori resistance to colonialism.

[62] Heidegger perceived the interpretive process as circular (*the hermeneutic circle*), involving movements back and forth between the whole and parts of the experience, the individual's fore-structure of understanding and what has been learned (Hoy 2006, 179, 190; Wojnar and Swanson 2007, 175).

Māori and indigenous ways of knowing: the relationship with narrative

The notion of dialogue as a facilitator and medium of understanding resembles the Māori concept of *kōrero*, meaning "to speak" (verb) or "speech" (noun). Royal (2009) discusses kōrero as a form of knowledge, in fact, the predominant form in which *mātauranga* (knowledge, wisdom) was expressed prior to the introduction of the written word in the 19th century. As 'sequences of words spoken in order to transfer some kind of meaning' (Royal 2009, 102), there are many types of kōrero, ranging from everyday conversations and formal oratory, to stories.

Story and storytelling occupy a special position in indigenous philosophy,[63] sustaining and protecting knowledge in what once were primarily oral cultures (Lee 2009, 2). As Kovach (2009, 95) notes, there are generally two forms of stories: those containing mythical elements, such as creation and teaching stories, and personal narratives of place, events and experiences. Both forms signify relationships, convey understandings about the nature of reality, and transmit cultural knowledge pertaining to values and practices (Kovach 2009, 95; Marsden, 2003, 55-7; Royal, 2009, 102-3). These stories are drawn from a "fund" of narratives, expressions and proverbs and so on, which becomes, over time, a tradition of knowledge (Royal 2009, 103). This does not preclude however, the construction of stories that tell of the lives and experiences of Māori in the present, utilising various forms, contexts and media (Lee 2009, 4).

As part of the indigenous decolonisation kaupapa, narrative inquiry enables a reclaiming and recovery of traditional knowledge and it ensures that contemporary indigenous lives, realities and struggles are heard, *in* the voices and words of indigenous peoples themselves (Lee 2009, 1-2). Thus, traditional stories, life histories, oral histories and tribal histories have been obtained via conversations, qualitative in-depth interviews, research/sharing circles and *wānanga* (collective forum in which knowledge is created and evaluated) (Kovach 2009, 99, 123-5; Lee 2009, 8). Key to the appropriate use of story in research with indigenous peoples is the researcher's understanding of cultural epistemology – without this misinterpretation and misuse are very real risks (Kovach 2009, 97).

Summary

In summary, this part of the chapter has established the following points. First, critical realism and kaupapa Māori supported by Ricoeurian hermeneutic phenomenology constitute an appropriate theoretical and methodological approach for this study, given its interest in the phenomena of adoption and identity as experienced and interpreted by Māori adoptees. Furthermore, the study's focus solely

[63] Here I am considering Māori philosophies as embedded within the notion of indigenous philosophies more broadly, taking the lead from Royal, Lee, Mika and Stewart-Harawira.

on Māori adoptees/participants warrants an approach that accounts explicitly and theoretically for the social, cultural and political contexts in which Māori live and experience the world. It also has to provide guidance for conducting research according to Māori customs and traditions. Second, there are several ontological and epistemological parallels between critical realism, Kaupapa Māori and hermeneutic phenomenology that justify the combined use of these approaches. Both Mika (2015, 100) and Murton (2012, 87-88) argue that an "interweaving" of indigenous and European philosophies and methodologies is necessary to subject the latter to critique. Interweaving these approaches also enables a "telling" of how indigenous voices are marginalised and distorted, while providing space for political and intellectual gains (Murton 2012, 87-8).

The configuration of these approaches is determined ultimately by what will best address the research questions, but perhaps more importantly, what will enable the telling of the experiences and stories of the participants. As noted by Jones et al (2010, 4), methods must also be interrogated for their compatibility with KMR, for instance, the extent to which they are culturally sensitive, cross-culturally reliable and generate useful outcomes for Māori (Cram 2002, 13). These considerations are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six:
Methods

Extending from the preceding discussion of methodology, this chapter outlines the methods and processes involved in the implementation of this research, as well as the deliberations involved. The chapter begins with a discussion of my position in relation to the research focus and participants. It also describes the steps taken to ensure reflexive rigour. Ethical and quality assurance considerations follow, rounding out the foundations of this research. The remaining part of the chapter provides details about participant recruitment, the collection of participant narratives via semi-structured interviews, and an in-depth account of the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis undertaken.

Researcher reflexivity and self-location

The ontological and epistemological commonalities shared by critical realism, kaupapa Māori approaches and hermeneutic phenomenology mean that researcher reflexivity and self- or social location is viewed and valued similarly (Price and Martin 2018, 93). While reflexivity might be understood as an exercise to control bias, it is equally utilised as a means of achieving new depth in research (McCabe and Holmes, 2009, 1521). The hermeneutic tradition considers that researcher knowledge or prior experience are potentially valuable guides to inquiry (Lopez and Willis 2004, 729). However, because the researcher is implicated in every area of research, and interpretation is viewed as inevitable (making bracketing or suspension of judgement impossible: Reiners 2012, 120), it is necessary for the researcher to declare their position and to reflect on their preconceptions and assumptions (Price and Martin 2018, 93). This enables a distinction to be more easily drawn between participant and researcher fore-structures of understanding and makes the interpretive process more explicit (Laverty 2003, 28; Wojnar and Swanson 2007, 174-5). It also helps to guard against premature interpretive closure or making interpretations that support what is expected or already known (Thorne, Reimer Kirkham and O'Flynn-Magee 2004, 8/11). Geanellos 1998, 241).

Aside from or in addition to my researcher positioning, as a Māori adoptee my relationship to and interest in this kaupapa is deeply personal. I experience being-adopted-and-Māori as a subject as well as a research object, and so it was important that I was able to establish some "critical distance" from my own material, and recognise my own experiences as separate from the participants' stories

(Willig 2017, 282). Being an insider researcher places additional importance on reflexivity. To ensure I practiced reflexively, I took notes of my thoughts, feelings, reflections and experiences throughout the research process, and was also interviewed by a colleague about my experiences of adoption and Māori identity using the same interview schedule used for the participants in this research. This enabled me to analyse, synthesise and write up my experiences and interview text as pre-understandings (see Appendix II), which formed part of the appropriation stage in the early analysis process, yet to be described.

Reflexivity in engaging with participants

The relational emphasis in indigenous and kaupapa Māori methodologies requires that researchers locate themselves in relation to the participants and/or participating community. Self-knowledge is vital, though always *in relation to others* (Kovach 2009, 111). Furthermore, there needs to be a balance between reflexivity and subjectivity (Willig 2017, 282). Participants were aware of my shared position as a Māori adoptee – I shared this as part of building rapport, identifying with the participants and making it clear that my interests in the research were not detached or voyeuristic but from a perspective of potentially having been similarly affected or impacted. However, I refrained from sharing my own experiences in any depth in the course of interviews, so that the focus would remain on participants' experiences. In some cases, in order to prompt or encourage participants to respond to specific questions, I shared some of my own experiences. This was helpful by way of illustration and gave some participants an idea of how they might think about the question in relation to their own experiences. This prudent sharing of *whakaaro* (thoughts, opinions) enacts several of the kaupapa Māori research principles cited earlier: *titiro, whakarongo…kōrero* – looking, observing and listening in order to develop understandings and find an appropriate place from which to speak; *kaua e māhaki* – waiting to be invited to share knowledge or sharing where useful*; kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* – not trampling on the *mana* (status) of participants; all underpinned by *kia tūpato* – being careful and reflective about insider status (Smith 2005, 98; Jones et al. 2010, 6, 9).

Recognising the power dynamics involved in research, and mitigating any potential imbalances was another important consideration. This was supported by containing what I divulged in the interview setting and ensuring participants had enough 'space' to share (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 5-6). Additionally, in order to strike the right balance between participant-led or researcher-led contributions related to the meanings of adoption and identity, I decided not to inquire about identity explicitly or directly, so that any mention was participant-led or directed. This may have been a moot point, given that identity is commonly associated with the experience of adoption. However, rather

than assume the importance of identity for participants and their adoptee positioning, omitting explicit reference left room for the construct to emerge in their stories and sense-making, if indeed it was significant.

Research rigour

Interpretive research has its own notions of rigour distinct from quantitative research (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005, 258). These have been adhered to in this study. Reflexive rigour/rigorous reflexivity involves the researcher being aware of, open about and accounting for the ways in which his or her background, beliefs, life experience and political views have a bearing on the research. As noted in the section above, I provide evidence of my pre-judgements, *self-reflection/reflexivity* in Appendix II so as to make the interpretation process more transparent.

Theoretical rigour requires that the findings are clearly supported with evidence from previous research and literature, as well as the inquiry being theoretically and methodologically coherent. An extensive review of relevant literature was undertaken to inform the development of the research topic and inquiry, build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of adoption and identity, contextualise participants' narratives and experiences, and to reflect on the significance and contributions of the research findings. Relatively few restrictions or exclusion criteria were imposed, in order to enable participation of individuals with a range of perspectives and experiences.

Procedural or methodological rigour involves the careful documentation of research decisions and findings, including stages of data collection and analysis. A relatively high level of detail has been included in both this and the methodology chapter, to make the rationale and assumptions underlying the research design and implementation explicit and clear.

Interpretive rigour is demonstrated when an account is seen to represent accurately the understandings of events and actions according to the worldview of participants. Furthermore, the resulting written record of an interpretive study will be judged on intelligibility, coherence and comprehensibility by the reader, and "spontaneous validity" (Angen 2000, 391), meaning the extent to which it evokes recognition and a feeling of authenticity. Smith and Osborn (2008, 56) also cite the links readers make between interpretive study findings, their own personal and professional experience, and assertions in existing literature as a source of theoretical generalisability. Peer debriefing in the form of input from the supervision team, colleagues and Māori research peers was utilised to support interpretive as well as theoretical rigour. Dr. Denise Blake has undertaken research in the area of adoption and so was able to apply her knowledge and expertise in the data analysis phase particularly, raising questions and identifying when novel lines of inquiry were emerging. With some

distance from the research matter, but expertise in relevant areas (qualitative and kaupapa Māori research), the other members of the supervision team and my colleagues were able to bring alternative views and considerations that strengthened the inquiry, most notably at the design stage. Regular supervisory meetings throughout the data collection, analysis and write-up stages and informal discussions provided opportunities to test and defend the plausibility of emergent findings.

Lastly, evaluative rigour may be upheld by following correct procedures ethically and politically, including obtaining ethical approval and undertaking consultation with relevant community leaders and representatives. Both of these steps have been taken in this research and are discussed in the following sections.

Ethics

Although ethics can be said to be intrinsic to phenomenological inquiry (in terms of including participant values in the inquiry and safeguarding against deception), the close interactions involved in divulging personal experiences can raise issues of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as other interpersonal difficulties (Guba and Lincoln 1994, 115). Strictly speaking confidentiality cannot be guaranteed; research findings/dissemination contain excerpts from interviews/transcripts. Participants were given the option of being identified or using a pseudonym to ensure anonymity; six participants chose to use their names, and remaining participants chose or were assigned pseudonyms. Where pseudonyms were assigned, names similar to and of equal commonality or usage in the era in which participants were born, were selected.

Given the deeply personal nature of the subject matter, care was taken to ensure that participants felt safe within the research. Inquiries were made sensitively throughout the contact, interview and follow-up processes, respecting participants' boundaries relating to their involvement. Contact details for professional support were made available to participants at the time of interviewing, in case they experienced distress as a result of sharing their experiences.

An application for ethical approval was made to the UC Human Ethics Committee (HEC), and approval was granted in July 2012 (see Appendix VII). There were no substantive concerns raised by the committee regarding the application. The most ethically challenging aspect, apart from being focused on a personal and potentially sensitive topic, was the decision to exclude mention of the interest in identity in the study material. This point was explained in the HEC application (see below), and the de-briefing form (Appendix V) to be provided to participants following the interview was also included for review.

> The full title of the PhD research is "*Ka tū te whare, ka ora: the constructed and constructive identities of the Māori adoptee*". Although identity is a major focus of the study (and of adoption literature), I am concerned that an explicit mention will lead participants or prime them to interpret and discuss their adoption experiences in a particular way, and therefore affect the credibility of the data. I want to be able to explore identity more critically (i.e. *does* 'identity' emerge in discussion of adoption experiences? If so, how? If not, how not, why not?), which I think can be achieved by 1) using an alternative title (The lived experiences of Māori adoptees) for the information sheet and consent form; and 2) not asking participants about identity in the first instance, rather leaving them to offer identity as an issue in relation to their adoption. Some of the later questions/prompts in the interview schedule ask about identity implicitly, but hopefully in such a way and order that does not overly bias the initial sharing of the adoption experience. (UC HEC application 2012/70)

As part of the study documentation, an information sheet and consent form were also developed (see Appendices III, IV). Details regarding the secure storage of information/data were provided and assessed within the ethics application.

Tikanga Māori

As a Māori researcher, committed to *tikanga Māori,* Māori ethics and customs were woven through the research. In particular, I adhered to the tenets of the Te Ara Tika ethical review framework (Hudson et al. 2010, 6-11). Firstly, this project has its origins (whakapapa) in my first-hand experience as a Māori adoptee, and my personal commitment to positive, empowered Māori identities and kaupapa Māori. Although the project is indeed researcher-initiated and led, the design of the project was intended to uphold participants' mana and give them control over their contributions and how they are utilised. Secondly, efforts were made to ensure that the project proceeded correctly (*kia tika ai te haere o te kaupapa*), with respect (*manaaki*) maintained throughout by incorporating Māori research supervision (Dr Paul Whitinui, Professor Angus MacFarlane, Dr Denise Blake and other Māori advisors) and consultation (the UC Māori Research Advisory Group, see Appendix VIII), following tikanga Māori and ethical processes, approaching participants through appropriate channels, i.e. Māori networks, and allowing participants multiple opportunities for input and feedback.

Participant recruitment

Sample sizes vary between hermeneutic phenomenological studies, but are typically small (1 – 15), due in part to the detailed case by case analysis involved, and the reduced concern with notions of empirical generalisability (Smith and Osborn 2008, 55-6). Sample size is not necessarily pre-determined, and interviews may continue until saturation, the point at which no new ideas relating to the experience would emerge through further data collection (Laverty 2003, 29). In this study 15 participants were recruited and interviewed over a period of six years, at which point common patterns of experience were apparent.

In the absence of an adoption register, or any list of individuals and their contact details in which adoption status is identified, purposive sampling was utilised to recruit participants. Purposively selecting participants (a form of deliberative and non-random selection) enabled recruitment on the basis of lived experience of being adopted and Māori, and willingness to share these experiences (Laverty 2003, 29). Individuals of Māori descent legally adopted (not whāngai) within the 'closed stranger' adoption period (1955 until approximately 1985) were sought to participate in interviews. Both men and women were sought, in order to provide a sense of adoption experiences across genders. Although gender analysis was not conducted, the research recognises that gender, as socially generated, could have played a part in adoption experiences.

Several friends or acquaintances in Māori networks and communities suggested potential participants (their family members and/or friends). This method of recruitment was deemed to be 'safe' because my acquaintances were able to 'vet' my integrity and trustworthiness, before suggesting and approaching their *whanaunga* (relatives). This type of sampling method is particularly appropriate for research with Māori communities, for whom the term research may have negative connotations because of its continued construction of Māori as deficient and problematic (Smith 1999a, 92). A purposive technique conducted through community and whānau networks sees the creation of a 'gatekeeper' role in which network members can control the access that external researchers have to the wider community (Ahuriri-Driscoll, Baker and Midgley 2005, 11-12). In all cases these contacts chose to discuss the study initially with their friend/family member, and upon ascertaining their interest and consent to be approached, returned with information/details (email addresses) for me to make contact directly. An information sheet and consent form were then provided via email. Eleven out of the 15 total participants were approached via acquaintances or contacts; the remaining 4 participants were recruited directly.

Four Māori adoptees who were approached declined to participate, with no specific reason given. Of those who participated, nine were women and six men. Seven were born and adopted in the

1960s, and eight in the 1970s. Participants ranged in age from 41 to 58 at the time of the interview; the median age was 47 years. Eight participants were born in the North Island, and seven in the South Island (see Table 4 below). Three participants were placed in adoptive families with one Māori parent. Six had siblings who were also adopted. Three of the participants have two Māori birth parents, and the remainder had a Māori birth father and Pākehā birth mother. Three are yet to meet their Māori birth father. Three have partners who are also adopted, and four have Māori partners.

Table 4: Participant names/pseudonyms and demographic details.

Participant	Gender	Year and place of birth	Birth parent ethnicity	Interview date & age
Sonya	Female	1972 - Blenheim	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2013 (41)
Lisa	Female	1973 - Auckland	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2013 (40)
Mere	Female	1963 - Dannevirke	Māori mother, Māori father	2013 (50)
Emma	Female	1976 - Christchurch	Māori mother, Māori father	2017 (41)
Dean	Male	1964 - Mataura	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (53)
Natasha	Female	1969 - Auckland	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (48)
Kere	Male	1971- Greymouth	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (46)
Rua	Female	1975 - Christchurch	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (42)
Donna-Marie	Female	1969 - Whangārei	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (48)
Daniel	Male	1966 - Auckland	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (51)
Rick	Male	1964 – Blenheim	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2017 (53)
Shane	Male	1971 - Lower Hutt	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2018 (47)
Jenny	Female	1960 - Auckland	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2018 (58)
Rachel	Female	1974 - Christchurch	Māori mother, Māori father	2018 (44)
Paul	Male	1972 – Auckland	Pākehā mother, Māori father	2019 (47)

Data collection – interviews

The main requirement of data collection in phenomenological research is in-depth, detailed discussion of experience and/or narrative. A research interview is the ideal and therefore most common format to elicit this type of discussion. An interview is a personal, dialogical interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Although it is somewhat conversational, it is a conversation with a specific structure and purpose. The structure involves careful questioning and listening on the behalf of the interviewer, in order to ascertain specific knowledge and understandings (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 5-6). An interview schedule was developed that consisted of open-ended and follow-up/probing questions in a general chronological order (see Appendix IX). For example, the opening or introductory question invited an initial 'story' about the participants' birth and adoption, followed by questions about experiences in childhood, reunion with birth family and current-day. Prompts were included as part of the schedule (as well as being asked spontaneously), to ensure that certain details were included in the narrative:

Once participants had consented to take part in the research, face-to-face[64] interviews were scheduled at a time and place convenient to them. I travelled to meet with participants in their own homes, and in accordance with the principle of *aroha ki te tangata* (allowing people to define their own space and meet on their own terms: Smith 2005, 98), provided the option of including whānau members or friends as a form of support. One participant took up this offer, bringing her husband into the interview. I also asked participants if they wanted to conduct *karakia* (prayer) prior to what would be a discussion of whakapapa, recognising the sacred nature of the kōrero. We did not, however, undertake mihimihi within the introductions, given that this was the kaupapa of the interview. I also provided *koha* (gift, donation) and *kai* (food), as a small token of my appreciation for the participants' contributions to my research, but also to effect *manaakitanga* in terms of reciprocity and exchange (manaaki ki te tangata – sharing, being generous: Smith 2005, 98).

The use of open-ended questions allowed the interviewee to take a more active role in guiding our discussion, including introducing new issues (Smith and Osborn 2008, 55; Kovach 2009, 124). This approach ensured depth within the confines of a single interview. I took a "neutral but interested stance," attending to the interviewee's responses, but keeping contributions to a minimum so as to not interrupt the "story flow" (Roulston 2010, 17; Seidman 2019, 91-2). Balancing neutrality with an accepting and empathic demeanour was also important, in order to cultivate an environment in which

[64] *Kanohi ki te kanohi* interaction is highly valued within Kaupapa Māori research (Smith 1999a, 120; Cram, 2001, 43). Meeting face to face is central to Māori concepts and practices around communication, It signals a level of effort to engage in person, and both parties are able to evaluate the other in terms of intangible properties such as wairua, which can only be "experienced and felt through the physical being of the person" (O'Carroll 2013, 5-6).

interviewees were encouraged to share in-depth details of life events (Roulston 2010, 87; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, 106). Follow-up questions or 'probes' were then posed to build upon and explore interviewees' responses, encourage further description, to clarify detail, or to inquire about subjective or interpretive elements (Seidman 2019, 88-90; Roulston 2010, 13; Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, 161).

Interviews ranged between just under 1.5 hours and over 2 hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and transcripts (with some clarifying and follow-up questions) were provided to participants for their feedback regarding any edits or retractions, or any additional thoughts or reflections. However, only four participants responded upon receiving their transcripts and the associated questions for clarification. This raised the question of what non-response might mean. Those who did respond noted their discomfort with seeing their conversational language in written form – one commented that "it's generally awful reading how I speak." This aversion may account for the non-response from other participants, or it could be interpreted as implicit approval, lack of concern or alternatively, general busy-ness. Two participants expressly noted their lack of interest in receiving or seeing their transcripts.

Data interpretation and analysis

The initial interviews prompted considerable reflection upon the proposed methodology and informed several changes. Firstly, it was realised that narratives as well as lived experiences were generated by the interviews,[65] clarifying that Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenological theory was most appropriate to follow but that the data analysis might need to be augmented with aspects of narrative inquiry.[66] Secondly, it was recognised that thematic analysis on its own did not yield particularly rich descriptions of identity, indicating the need for a revised approach to the data. Concurrent identification of the significance of the 'nature-culture divide' for both adoption and identity from the literature informed a focused reading of the interview data for mention of nature/nurture and/or biological connection. This was found to be much more fruitful in terms of depth. In combination with the inductive/thematic and narrative-focused analyses, this added lens constitutes a multi-stage analysis of the interview data (the approaches taken to analysis and interpretation are outlined in table form in Appendix XI).

[65] The experiences recounted by interviewees were sometimes of a relatively distant past, from childhood and even early adulthood that had occurred between 20 and 40 years earlier. In such instances, specific details sometimes alluded interviewees and recall was notably difficult, calling into question the immediacy of the experiences, and therefore perhaps also the 'lived experience' itself. Inability to remember factual points of experience may lead to filling in gaps with data based on assumptions and other sets of experiences (Patel 2005, 328-9).

[66] According to Roulston (2010, 17), the detailed descriptions and interpretations elicited from phenomenologically-oriented interviews may equally be examined using forms of analysis other than phenomenological reduction, including narrative.

Interpretation in hermeneutic phenomenological research

Because interpretation is recognised as part and parcel of human life, it is also perceived as a process that "permeates" all stages of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry (Koch 1999, 31; Finlay 2009, 11). Interpretation precedes analysis of an interview transcript; meaning-making and knowledge generation occurs throughout the research process, including in the course of interviewing (Wiklund-Gustin 2010, 36). However, Ricoeur's theory of interpretation involves a number of steps (distanciation, appropriation, explanation and understanding) for working with text, which I took in analysing interview data. .

Distanciation involves the distancing of the text from its author, the author's intentions (for instance, the research participant's meanings) and the original context and audience (Ricoeur 1981a, 139). This was achieved by committing interviews to written text via transcription; there was no longer a direct interaction or engagement with the text author (participant), it now had a different audience (readers) and was read outside of the original situation of the discourse (Tan et al. 2009, 7/15).

Appropriation is where the meaning of the text is taken on and altered by the interpreter (Ricoeur 1981b, 158-9). The interpreter opens him or herself up to being altered or affected by the text, hence adopting a "phenomenological attitude" (Lindseth and Norberg 2004, 149). This stage involved several readings of each interview text: a first naïve reading followed by several re-readings in order to grasp a meaning of the text as a whole, and to develop familiarity with it (Ricoeur 1976, 74-5). Remaining receptive and responding to what the participant as author was saying allowed new possible meanings and modes of being-in-the-world to emerge (Kearney 2004, 32).

Explanation employs more methodical interpretation (Lindseth and Norberg 2004, 149). The text was interpreted in two ways, firstly for "what it says" and subsequently for "what it talks about" – structure and theme respectively (Ricoeur 1976, 88). First analytic structure, internal relations and component parts of the text were examined (Ricoeur 1976, 74; Ricoeur 1981b, 152). Emplotted events were read for the linking of motives, acts and consequences (Mattingly and Garro 2000, 10), metaphor for hidden experiences and linkages to wider discourses and cultural idioms (Eastmond 2007, 252), and segments of text for their signifying function (Ricoeur 1981b, 155). As a whole these narrative characteristics give a sense of the participant's expectations and understandings of being-in-the-world (Mattingly and Garro 2000, 3; Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 16). Thematic analysis followed, outlining language units indicative of distinct and interesting concepts, or that relate to the research questions (Tan et al. 2009, 10/15). Resulting codes were then examined for similarity or close connection, and those with common meanings grouped into themes, which were then described.

Following this step, the understanding of the text was deepened and broadened by continual movement between the parts and the whole in a hermeneutic arc (Ricoeur 1981c, 221), and investigation of other factors such as my documented pre-understandings, what I knew of each participant/author and their context (Tan et al. 2009, 9/15). Questions put to the text included: do the themes validate or invalidate the naïve understanding? How do the themes and subthemes relate to the research question, the context of the study or the fields of adoption and identity? (Lindseth and Norberg 2004, 150). The end result is a co-generated understanding of the phenomenon being studied, the reconstruction of experience (Laverty 2003, 26), and a restoration of the text to a living communication (Ricoeur 1981b, 152).

Critical realism analysis

In order to move beyond the empirical and the actual, critical realism proposes several (non-linear) steps for working with experiential data that can be reconciled with several aspects of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation (see Appendix X). A first step includes the identification of demi-regularities, tendencies that can be seen in trends or patterns in empirical data. Demi-regularities can be identified through qualitative data coding, starting with dominant codes. Demi-regularities constitute the main empirical findings. A second step includes abduction or theoretical re-description; empirical data indicative of the 'real' are re-described using theoretical concepts and situated within a macro-level context. Finally, retroduction involves identification of the necessary social and contextual conditions in which a particular causal mechanism takes effect, resulting in the empirical trends observed. Questions such as "what social conditions cause these trends to appear as they do?" and "how do we explain the phenomena that we are currently interested in?" are posed to the empirical findings and their re-description (Olsen 2010, xxv). Bearing similarity to the hermeneutic arc, retroduction involves moving from concrete to abstract, and back again (Fletcher 2017, 185, 188, 189).

A further parallel between an interpretive approach and critical realism is that of the dual consideration of participants' subjective meaning-making *and* the social structures through which their meaning-making is possible (Colahan et al. 2012, 52). Colahan et al (2012) perceive this dual focus as possible through the incorporation of dialectical interpretive positions posited by Ricoeur (1970, 27-36) – a hermeneutic of empathy, and a hermeneutic of suspicion.[67] Each position interprets the text in

[67] With regards to the inclusion of a hermeneutics of suspicion in the table in Appendix XI, it should be noted that at the point at which Ricoeur developed his theory of interpretation, he had already moved away from referring to suspicion explicitly. In that theory additional and different procedures and techniques to reveal meaning were employed – suspicion was an important but not the only one (Scott-Baumann 2009, 78). Where the focus of a hermeneutics of empathy is on the text itself, it fits well within 'explanation'. However, a hermeneutics of suspicion may look to the text as well as outside, meaning that it can sit across 'explanation' and 'understanding'. Akrivoulis (2016, 257) distinguishes between a hermeneutics of suspicion (aimed at considering intentions and motives, distorting or legitimising functions of ideology, and the truthfulness of the text's claims) and a post-critical hermeneutics of naïveté – which looks more deeply at the

a different way. The former focuses on the content of the narrative and seeks to reconstruct the speaker/author's experience in their own terms. The latter adopts a more critical view of the speaker/author's role and use of language. Felski (2011, 574) describes this as "reading against the grain and between the lines"; accordingly, note was taken of what was not said and contradictions in talk which might hint at the simultaneous mobilisation of multiple discourses (Colahan et al. 2012, 53). Extant theory was important in deconstructing the social structure of the text (Colahan et al. 2012, 51), and historical context and social conditions clarified what a text might not have acknowledged, but that it was nonetheless shaped and sustained by (Felski 2011, 574). A hermeneutic of suspicion thus probes for meanings that are inaccessible to the authors. This more critical hermeneutics, with its focus on revealing the role of hidden structures and tacit cultural dynamics in reproducing particular social meanings and values (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000, 288), may go some way to articulating the deeper reality structures sought by critical realism.

Kaupapa Māori considerations

KMR methodology is concerned less with specific tools of analysis, than the approach taken to interpretation within the research (Pihama, et al. 2008, 80). Because interpretation is a subjective and situated undertaking, the capabilities and orientation of the interpreting individual will have a significant bearing on the resulting findings. Thus, the understanding and worldview of the researcher, including an awareness of Māori systems, knowledge, people and processes, are considered critical to the analytical process within KMR (Pihama et al. 2008, 80).

Kia tūpato – exercising caution (Smith 1999a, 120) is a critical part of KM data analysis. This involves thinking through the potential implications of the knowledge that is produced, how the findings will be received and therefore how they need to be presented to a range of audiences. Political astuteness and understanding of the dynamics of Māori and research networks are important attributes for the researcher in this regard (Pihama et al. 2008, 80). Challenging prevailing thinking, attitudes and assumptions while maintaining the mana and dignity of Māori participants and communities is crucial if useful and beneficial outcomes for Māori are to be realised. In relation to the issues of adoption and identity, this involved attending sensitively to the broad range of experiences and contexts of participants, and findings that had the potential to challenge as well as support Māori knowledge, values and practices.

dominant practices and discourses *that* conceal and legitimise founding practices and relations. Akrivoulis considers this a means of correcting for an excessive application of the hermeneutics of suspicion.

Māori values and principles were an important part of the analysis phase, given that these are instrumental in the way Māori view, interpret and experience the world (Marsden 2003, 28). Māori kaupapa such as those presented in Table 1 were kept in the foreground when analysing text/narratives, to maintain a strengths focus and safeguard against deficit theorising. The two questions underpinning the kaupapa Māori analysis, in accordance with the tenets of KMR were: i) how does this finding mitigate, resist or undo social structures that have served to disenfranchise Māori? ii) how does this point empower or generate benefits for Māori people and communities? This is not to suggest that findings were adulterated, but the decolonisation and legitimisation imperatives of KMR were utilised to provide an accountability check for the data analysis.

Emerging codes and themes

According to the hermeneutic, critical realist and kaupapa Māori interpretive processes cited above, concepts and categories resulting from the first three interviews were transferred into data tables to develop themes (see Braun and Clark 2006, 89; Smith and Osborn 2008, 67-77). The key segments of transcribed text related to coded concepts or categories were listed in the order that they occurred in the interview, with coding and commentary in an adjacent column. Questions arising from the quotes, points and commentary were posed in an additional column, and then investigated by returning to the text. Where these questions were not addressed in or resolved by the interview text, they were set aside for follow-up contact. Broader considerations or implications emanating from the quote/point/ commentary were abstracted and described in a fourth column. At this point connections (mechanisms, patterns) between emerging themes were drawn, and were either clustered together as similar themes, or super and subordinate concepts. A final table of superordinate themes across the interviews was constructed by comparing and contrasting the themes associated with each transcript. Themes were selected based on their prevalence across the interviews as well as for their 'illuminating' qualities, and the 'richness' of associated text. I was also able to identify some gaps in my analysis, which could be addressed at the appropriation stage by documenting my pre-understandings more thoroughly (see Appendix II), and by undertaking a third stage of analysis focused on narrative (see Appendix XI). Undertaking the analysis in this way enabled the relationship between experiences (of adoption and being Māori) and interpretations (the meaning of these experiences for identity) revealed in the narrative, to be explored.

For the remaining 12 interviews, I imported the transcribed data[68] into NVivo 12 Plus for coding and analysis rather than construct further data tables. This was partly due to the volume of data; NVivo enabled a perspective across the dataset according to node/code as well as a chronological perspective of each narrative. I set about identifying key points or segments of text related to the experience of adoption, and labelled them based on what they denoted (open coding/inductive analysis). Some segments of text were double or triple-coded in the first round of coding, to ensure that all possible meanings were incorporated. Coding was an iterative and accumulative process; where a new node/category emerged in subsequent transcripts, I would return to previously coded transcripts to check for mention of the new node. Once all 15 interviews were coded, I exported the text summaries of each node/category for further analysis. At this stage the data were cleaned, and I edited nodes to filter out coded texts which had been coded more fittingly in other nodes. Reading and writing across each node/category, I was able to summarise common patterns or highly recurrent themes across the transcripts, as well as the key concepts employed. As well as ascertaining the 'flavour' or 'character' of each node/category, I was also able to see which related to one another, or clustered naturally together. Through this process I developed three primary clusters of nodes/categories: these were being adopted; being Māori and adopted; and reunion with birth family.

Nodes related to narrative features also emerged in the course of analysis, as instances where participants referred explicitly to story/narrative as part of their experience of adoption: telling, narrating and constructing the origin story, and adoption entrance narratives. Other nodes that did not appear to fit easily in either the primary clusters or narrative nodes were exported as text summaries and analysed thematically to consider how they might relate to existing clusters through meta-themes. Following something of a hermeneutic arc, this process was messy and involved a moving back and forward between the nodes, between nodes and whole narratives as well as between nodes, narratives, literature and theoretical concepts, the concrete and the abstract. Reading, re-reading and coding/commentary in several stages was ultimately productive – enabling a deep familiarity with the data and understanding of the content and complexity of participants' meanings (Smith and Osborn 2008, 67).

[68] I transcribed the first five interviews, which aided significantly in building familiarity with these data. Although a professional transcriber was engaged for the remaining 10 interviews, checking the completed transcriptions entailed careful listening to each of the audio-recordings. The professional transcriber signed a confidentiality form prior to receiving and working with interview recordings (see Appendix X).

Summary

The theoretical and methodological strands drawn together in this study of Māori adoptee narratives correspond to two distinct and complementary strategies – making the hidden obvious and making the obvious obvious (Noblit and Hare 1988, 17-18; Brinkmann 2018, 16). With respect to the first strategy, the critical stances taken by critical realism and kaupapa Māori seek to reveal the ideological working mechanisms that underlie phenomena of interest, as well as hidden power structures that influence the politics of human experience (Brinkmann 2018, 17, 46). Drawing on both of these approaches enabled the discursive and social contexts of Māori adoptees to be considered, as they operate causally in the production of Māori adoptee identities. Such a view is vital, given the considerable role of ideology, social institutions and structures in defining, shaping and regulating the boundaries of adoptee lives (Patton 2000, 15). Furthermore, such analysis opens up possibilities for challenge and transformation.

Understanding of social processes entails a bi-directional focus, "toward the social, with an eye to the historical and cultural processes that form our habits and prejudices, but also toward the one who lives in the social and cultural world" (Brinkmann 2018, 78). In regards to the second strategy, hermeneutic phenomenology invites a deep engagement with human experience of the world and events, description and interpretation yielding new depths or dimensions to those things that are obvious but taken for granted in our lives (Brinkmann 2018, 18). This mode of inquiry privileges or centres Māori adoptee experiences, and enables social, cultural, collective a*nd* personal meanings to be explored.

The results of both strands of inquiry – critical and phenomenological – will be detailed in the next part of this thesis. A post-positivist model of Māori adoptee identity spanning discursive, actual and empirical domains will be drawn, and the implications for both adoption and identity, considered.

Chapter Seven:
Findings

The next pages comprise a prelude to the results generated from interviews with Māori adoptee participants. The form of the findings chapters is explained. A structure is employed that is consistent with both a life course and identity development trajectory, and Māori creation *pūrākau* (story, legend). Key findings related to the experiences of Māori adoptee participants are presented in three chapters based broadly on life stage, around key adoption-related and life events as they happened in chronological order. The focus in each of the chapters is broad, encompassing discourses as well as participant action and affect evident in narratives, in order to trace the emergence of adopted Māori selves and identities. Informed by a post-positivist realist identity framework, discursive and social positioning, positionality, adoptionality and subjectivity will each be explored as the foundations for personal and social identity. Discussion of emergent theoretical concepts is interspersed throughout the findings chapters following each substantive section, in order to consolidate and contextualise themes as they arise in and from the narrativised experiences.

A metaphor of creation: Māori adoptee being, becoming and emerging

In the process of analysing and writing up participants' narratives, a structure began to emerge that corresponded with Māori creation pūrākau (Lilley 2018, 248). Without deliberately invoking Māori concepts, participants used the words "abyss" and "black hole", and the metaphor of navigating in a starless night to describe their experiences of living without knowledge of whakapapa and whānau. Taking the lead from my participants, I began to explore notions of Te Kore and Te Pō.

Te Kore, sometimes translated literally as "abyss" and "chasm", is conceptualised as a primordial realm of nothingness or void (Nepia 2012, 32), a state of non-being (Marsden 1992, 134). It may also articulate *experiences and feelings* of absence, void, nothingness, loss and annihilation, lack and desire for something absent, as well as notions of potentiality, source or origin (Nepia 2012, 28, 32, 66). While participants began life not knowing their whakapapa, this did not mean that they *did not have* whakapapa – amidst the feelings of despair, loss and rootlessness, there was always the potential inherent in their whakapapa that might one day be known. In the void of silence and

invisibility (Le Cam 1990, 53), Māori adoptees begin to work out what "being-adopted-and-Māori" means. They occupy this rootless state of biological non-being, noting its boundaries and limits.[69]

> The original nothingness is built around an absence…And yet, this very absence holds a promise. It denies only to announce, withdraws only to herald. It delineates a human silhouette and calls for human consciousness. It etches out a project in the hollows of the proemial emptiness. (Le Cam 1990, 53)

While Te Kore has an amorphous quality, Te Pō is where the nothingness begins to take shape, and matter awakens. Te Pō, the night of many nights, is the realm of becoming (Marsden 1992, 135). The darkness is a space for human cognition and maturation, marked by the desire to know, and the turning of negation into affirmation (Knudsen 2004, 3, 151-2). Here Māori adoptees expand beyond the confines of their adoptive being, seeking their biological and genealogical selves through reunion with birth family. Their substance, their "realness" is proven through biological connection.

> …through the night of unseeing, the night of hesitant exploration, night of bold groping, night inclined towards day and emergence into the broad light of day. (Marsden 2003, 21)

I was reluctant to apply the final stage of creation, Te Ao Mārama (the world of light), to my participants' experiences. There is not necessarily an ultimate enlightenment, illumination or resolution arising from closed adoption. However, as the analysis unfolded, I realised there was indeed a space beyond becoming, that participants emerge into a world beyond their adoptive and birth families, as actors: "from out of the darkness you come…you suddenly realise you are something and have to act and enter the world of light" (Whiting 1992, 115). As adoption is a lifelong process, being is forever evolving and identity is never "complete", a state of emerging (Te Whaiao) rather than emergence (Te Ao Mārama) is more fitting. Te Whaiao is sometimes overlooked in the creation pūrākau; it represents a transitional or turning point, just prior to emergence (Piripi and Body 2010, 39).

Māori adoptees are still exploring their unfolding biological and genealogical being and potential, post knowledge of their birth origins. While they have always been in the process of

[69] The application of Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Whaiao or Te Ao Mārama is less apt if applied rigidly to the stages identified in the findings chapters. Te Kore is not limitless, and so exploring the boundaries of being-adopted-and-Māori, would not, strictly speaking, fit within Te Kore. However, as noted in participant narratives, aspects of Te Kore and Te Pō both apply to growing up adopted, which is a state bounded and constrained by absence and lack.

becoming, they are now in a position of increased agency owing to their life stage (early – middle adulthood). What are they becoming, beyond being-adopted-and-Māori, can they ever be "as if not adopted"? What are the limits of what they can become? What is the potential of what they can become, to themselves, to their birth families, to their people?

Finally, there is link between the metaphor of the whare employed in the title of this research project (Ka tū te whare, ka ora), and the creation metaphor applied to the data. In many tribal traditions, the *whare whakairo*/wharenui (carved house) is a metaphor for the world. One account perceives Te Pō, or darkness as lying outside the house and Te Ao Mārama as inside (Royal 2007b, 2007c). In other accounts, the graduation from light to dark, Te Ao Mārama to Te Pō, proceeds from the openness of the whare entrance to its enclosure at the rear (Prendergast 2012, 31).

In keeping with the creation pūrākau, each of the findings chapters are preceded by an excerpt from Whiti Hereaka's prologue from the book "Pūrākau: Māori Myths Retold by Māori Writers" (Hereaka 2019, 22-29). An excerpt about Te Kore precedes "Growing Up Adopted and Māori", an excerpt about Te Pō precedes "Becoming Bio-Genealogical", and an excerpt about Te Whaiao precedes "Emerging – Beyond Adoptive and Birth Families." These excerpts are reproduced with Whiti's permission. I chose these on the basis that they speak so beautifully to both the creation pūrākau, but also the experiences of Māori adoptees.

This is where we start. Let it be blank. Blank is different from nothing. Nothing suggests, well, nothing. No. Thing. But blank is possibility – it may be filled, it may change, or it may remain. Blank.

Listen close to the blank, the black, the dark. Let it invade you, colonise you, assimilate to it. This world is dark and all that there is, is darkness: a black void blankness. It is everything. It is Te Kore.

Te Kore, endless Te Kore, the void that stretches forever because there are no boundaries, no time. There is just Te Kore.

Te Kore, endless Te Kore. The void that has no substance. We cannot perceive it. We do not exist; there is just Te Kore.

Te Kore, endless Te Kore. The beginning and the end. All the things that have been and will be, but cannot manifest in…

Te Kore, endless Te Kore…

…everything, every possible thing, is enfolded together so very tightly that enormous heat is generated. It is the heat of creation, the blank feeling its potential.

And in the infinite void of Te Kore there is a hum, a hum of recognition: a prediction of change. We have started something. It is a beginning and in less than a second everything expands into…

Te Pō

Whiti Hereaka
Pūrākau: Māori myths retold by Māori writers
2019, 22

Chapter Eight:
Growing Up Adopted and Māori:
Experiences of Being Adopted and Māori
In the Adoptive Family

This chapter presents participants' experiences of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, the period prior to reconnection with birth family. For adoptees the time before reunion is significant as it encompasses being relinquished, and subsequently adopted. It is also a time of the emergence of consciousness, self, personal and social identity, as well as a multitude of formative experiences – in the home, at school and in society. Through it all, Māori adoptees learn what it *means* to be adopted and Māori, formulating their own narratives and positionality.

These experiences are discussed in three sections: participants' narratives relating to their entrance into their adoptive families with a focus on discursive content and meaning to participants; participants' experiences of "Being-adopted" and the primacy of loss and difference; and participants' experiences of "Being-adopted-and-Māori." The emergent themes from each section are described and illustrated through participant quotes, and then discussed as they correspond to relevant literature. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for the Māori adoptee's identity and position, and the following stages of their adoption-related journey.

The adoption entrance narrative

To narrate their story from its very beginning, participants pulled together information they had gleaned from adoptive parents, and birth parents to produce their "origin story". What they had been told by their adoptive parents constitutes an "entrance narrative". Adoption entrance narratives are the stories children are given to make meaning of their adoption status. These stories involve why they were relinquished, why they were adopted and how they fit into the adoptive family. Adoptive families draw on these narratives as a way to affirm the adopted child and as a way to produce the adoptive family as a valid family form (Kranstuber 2008, 2).

Reasons for relinquishment

Most of the participants reported that their adoptive parents knew very little about their birth parents. Lisa, Rick, Jenny, Emma, Natasha, Daniel, Sonya and Mere were given basic demographic details such as parental age and ethnicity. Being young (Lisa, Rick, Donna-Marie, Sonya) or having problems with mental health (Rachel) were presented as key reasons for their relinquishment, because birth parents did not have the resources or capacity to care for them at that time. Despite not being told that he was adopted, upon learning this from an outside source, Dean surmised exactly these reasons as part of an entrance narrative that he constructed for himself. Birth parents' marital status (or lack of ongoing relationship) was implicit rather than explicit in the participants' adoption entrance narratives – perhaps reflecting the taken for granted assumption that the child's illegitimacy precluded remaining with their birth mother.

Reasons for adoption

Adoptive parents' motivations for applying to adopt was also a central feature of the entrance narrative, with infertility the most commonly cited reason (for eight families: Lisa, Rick, Jenny, Rachel, Natasha, Shane, Sonya, Mere). This likely reflects the prevailing view that young married couples who could not have biological children were the most legitimate prospective parents (Berebitsky 2000, 150).[70] Other parents wanted to add to their existing families without conceiving and birthing biologically (Kere), or as a charitable action (Daniel), and the remaining participants (Paul, Rua, Emma, Donna-Marie, Dean) did not specify their adoptive parents' motivations.

Reasons for relinquishment and reasons for adoption, as the two components of the adoption entrance narrative were often framed in distinct tropes such as "Rescue", "Fate/Destiny", and "Chosen Child" (Kranstuber 2008, 32-44; Klevan 2013, 136-7). Participants' entrance narratives were often multi-themed, with "Rescue" and "Chosen Child" most common.

Rescue

For eight of the participants an element of rescue was noted in their narratives. Particular attributes of birth parents (for example, being "too young" or not mentally fit) implied a compromised ability to provide or parent and a potentially unfavourable situation from which the adoptee needed to be rescued. That adoptive parents had the capacities to provide a better life and opportunities, positioned

[70] "Less desirable parents" might be funnelled towards "hard-to-place children", resulting in a stratified adoption marketplace with more deserving/less deserving adoptive parents and more adoptable/less adoptable children (Raleigh 2018, 102). See Anne Else's (1991) discussion of "matching for marginality" as it occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand (73-81).

them as rescuers in this narrative. In adoption literature, it is posited that this well-meaning and possibly factual narrative leads adoptees to feel that they ought to be grateful for their "rescue", and also ashamed of their "lesser" origins (Kim 2010, 254-5; Baden 2016, 8-17); this was evident in how participants' experienced their being-adopted (Being-different section, 112), and in their coming to terms with this later in life (Weighing Up 'What If?'' section, 179). Despite the negative connotations of "rescue", reasons such as maternal age and mental health issues appeared to have been received as "matter-of-fact". Lisa's comment on her adoptive parents' narrative is one such example: "Um, yeah, all I knew was that my mother had been too young to keep me, which isn't a bad story." That their parents were not in a position to keep them seemed to be largely accepted by participants, based on the neutral tone in which this was often reported.

Fate/Destiny

Despite several participants growing up in families with close church affiliations (Daniel, Jenny, Rua, Paul), only Jenny's adoption entrance narrative was framed as part of "God's plan": "…I've been given a second chance almost, that I am chosen and my faith comes into this. That God is in control of everything, so it doesn't matter how you're conceived or where you're conceived, He can move things around to…fulfil his good purposes, and his pain." The term "second chance" connotes rescue as well as redemption. Furthermore, Jenny felt that being chosen by God to join her adoptive family gave her and her adopted siblings a "special" status: "Just grew up with it. I don't ever remember not knowing, my parents are Christian and they brought us up to be, for us to feel that we were chosen by God and we were special and we were chosen by him to be in their family. And so we always grew up with this lovely feeling of being really wanted." This narrative has enabled Jenny to make sense of her adoption, and demonstrates how her enduring Christian faith produces a story of adoption as a divine social practice.

The framing of adoption in religious terms did not always result in a feeling of 'specialness' however. In contrast to a "Destiny" narrative, but also aligned with a religious dictate, Daniel stated that his adoptive family presented his adoption as a duty and an act of charity. In the following quote Daniel expresses ambivalence about whether this was sufficient:

> It's all about charity with my parents, like they'd get orphans as well, they'd come round for the weekend now and then. So you were part of that charity, sort of in-between that orphan, there's you and there's this sibling. They did the best they could and tried to create that family thing, they did very well but the same with like refugees. They'd take in refugees so…I was part of that charity, which isn't really good enough but it's good but it's not good enough…

Daniel's comment that his adoptive parents "did the best they could" suggests some concern with appearing ungrateful. Daniel saw himself as just one of many recipients of his parents' charity as good Catholics – thus there was a lack of specificity and an impersonal quality, the polar opposite of "special" and "chosen."

The theme of fate/destiny was implicit in Sonya's parents' description of her as a "gift" that resolved their childlessness. Similarly to Jenny, this narrative contributed to Sonya's feeling that she was special: "…as a child it was like I was special and that my parents had tried to have a kid for a long time and when they got me it was a gift…everyone had treated me in my family like I was like a taonga basically…Oh, I thought I was special…my family made me feel special…" The difference of Sonya's account compared to Jenny's is that the redemptive aspect of adoption is linked to her parents' infertility rather than her illegitimacy. The sense of 'specialness' that this cultivated stayed with Sonya, and coloured her adoption entrance in a particularly positive light.

The Chosen Child

In contrast to the Destiny narrative, which attributes adoption to an external force or higher power, the Chosen Child narrative locates the responsibility of the child being placed in a family with the "choosing" adoptive parents (Kranstuber 2008, 34-6). This is a long-standing (circa 1940s) theme in the versions of adoption disclosure that adoptive parents were instructed to provide (Galvin 2006b, 143) and emphasises that adoptees were never unwanted, they were always loved. Jenny, Donna-Marie, Natasha, Mere and Lisa referred to being told they were chosen in their entrance narrative, and an additional seven participants talked about how they were either "specially picked" or their adoption fulfilled a need for their adoptive parents, primarily in terms of infertility, and in one case as a sibling to an adopted child.

Lisa liked hearing she was "chosen" while growing up. She also represented the entrance narrative of "Compelling Connection", as described by Krusiewicz and Wood (2001, 794), when she relayed how her adoptive father described the strength and immediacy of connection when he first met her: "… they also had the line, which I didn't realise was one of the lines that people get told, but how lucky they were that they got to choose their child, that other people don't have that option, which was a really nice thing to hear growing up. My dad tells the classic story of they walked in, I was in my cot, I rolled over and smiled at them…At 2 weeks, yeah. I think he believes that story." Lisa is not convinced by the "classic story" of connection, but appreciates that her father uses the story as a way to strengthen their relationship.

Similarly to the Rescue narrative, the Chosen Child narrative implies that the adoptee should feel grateful that they were chosen (Adamec and Pierce 2000, 70). Research with adult adoptees has

found that there is a burden associated with being worthy of being chosen that persists into adulthood (Modell 1994, 131). The "grateful adoptee" features later in Rachel, Mere and Shane's narratives as a set of problematic expectations (in the Being-adopted and Weighing Up 'What If' sections).

Disclosure

Participants' adoption entrance narratives also talked about being told of their adoption. Although, thirteen participants did not recall a specific point at which they were told, implying that it was not a "revelation" as such, and that they were very young at the time. Instead, they reported primarily "always knowing". According to Kranstuber (2008, 41-2), this renders adoption just part of an adoptee's life, positioning adoption as a natural and acceptable life course. In Natasha's words: "I knew from as young as I can know that I was adopted and it wasn't a thing, there was no major, it was no minor, it was just these two parents, my parents, my mum, my dad adopted me."

Lisa attributed the disclosure to her parents' openness, and Rachel to her parents being "straight up." Emma's adoptive mother's openness extended to giving Emma access to the official documentation associated with her adoption: "Ok so I've always known that I was adopted… I don't have any memory of not knowing that I was adopted, like I don't have any memory of finding out, and I've talked about it with my mum, she said 'you always knew, I told you from day dot.' And she had a drawer at the bottom of her desk that had all the non-identifying information that she'd gotten from Social Welfare, and she kept it in that drawer, and at any time I could go and look at it, so I always knew." This drawer took on something of a special quality, containing the evidence that Emma was "unique" by virtue of being adopted. Emma would show her friends the contents of the drawer when they came to visit.

Shane was able to recall a memory from early in his life that supported the notion of him being told he was adopted at a young age, but also illustrates his efforts to make sense of a "birth mother" figure he had been introduced to:

> …but I knew back as far as I can remember, even to the point where I kind of obviously didn't understand what they were talking about, cos there's one moment I can recall quite distinctly where there was a photograph and it was only a little photo and the people's faces in it were quite small, and I must have been 3 or 4 maybe, and they said 'oh who's that?' and I said 'oh it's my birth mother', and they said 'no, no, no, it's Nana.' They must have talked about this person called my birth mother, and so obviously this idea had got into my head… I didn't quite know where she fitted in, I must have had this idea that she'd popped up or she'd turned up.

Rua also recalls always knowing that she was adopted, but not comprehending what that meant until some time later: "I remember at primary school going 'nah nah nah nah nah, I am adopted' but I didn't know what it actually meant…" Donna-Marie's mother wasn't forthcoming or open initially; she was prompted to disclose Donna-Marie's adoption status only after Donna-Marie came home from primary school asking what "redopted" means, following a conversation with a classmate:

> …my mum hadn't intended to tell me when I was so young, she said that she had toyed with the idea of never telling me at all because you just want them to be yours…not that she probably could have ever done that. And mum said at first it was easy to distract me with other things, but the questions kept coming and so not long after she had to tell me, 'it means another lady had you but she couldn't look after you and she knew I loved you so she gave you to me to look after because she knew I loved you so much. So now you're my girl', and it's like 'oh, oh okay then.'

This account highlights Donna-Marie's mother's deliberations regarding the 'telling', and her concern that it would alter Donna-Marie being her daughter in some way. The story that Donna-Marie's mother provided emphasised both the need for Donna-Marie's adoption according to a rescue narrative, and the love and care that factored into both her relinquishment and adoption.

Openness in the telling of adoption does not guarantee or ensure openness in discussion of adoption and what it means. Rua for instance, recalled simply being told "you're adopted", and little else. For Rua and her adopted brother Paul, the lack of narrative surrounding the disclosure of their adoption status appears to have fostered an enduring lack of dialogue. Conversely, Donna-Marie and her mother *were* able to discuss Donna-Marie's adoption very openly, following Donna-Marie's mother's initial reticence. These examples provide a glimpse into the significance of disclosure for adoptive parents, in the broader context of the adoption process. As narrators, adoptive parents incorporated their own voice and experiences within the adoption entrance narrative, with important implications for meaning-making (as discussed further in the next section).

While not as common, some adoptees do not have an adoption status disclosed to them and in these instances such information is supplied inadvertently. For example, Dean was not told of his adoption; he found out via his family doctor's accidental disclosure when he was an adolescent. Where the non-disclosure itself sends a strong message that to talk of adoption is taboo (Kranstuber 2008, 44), Dean never felt able to broach this with his adoptive family. However, despite the negative consequences of not knowing he was adopted, and that his parents were in fact his birth grandparents, Dean eventually came to an understanding of why they had felt compelled to adopt him, narrating his

adoption in terms of "Rescue." This demonstrates the interconnectedness of narratives of relinquishment and adoption, and the process adoptees undertake of weaving them together.

Besides adoptive status, other details are disclosed to adoptees that are retained in adoption entrance narratives. The ethnicity of, and details relating to, Kere and Jenny's birth fathers were divulged by nurses. This information was particularly important because both Kere and Jenny's birth mothers have chosen to withhold any information that might identify and allow tracing of their Māori birth fathers. Emma was also told of a nurse's observations regarding her 'disruptive' behaviour while in hospital. Similar remarks were made by Daniel and Rick's parents about their continual crying in the period following their adoptions. Such comments from participants about the very early period of their lives proximal to their relinquishment affirm the impact of those events. Alternatively, these comments say something about the 'pathology' of the adopted infant/child, in accordance with the thinking of the time. It is apparent that adoption entrance narratives, despite being narrated by adoptees, are very much the co-production of adoptive parents, social workers, nurses and others (for example, wider family members). Adoptees' lack of memory of these events make them reliant on the voices of others for an account of this period.

The process of adoption and adoptive parents' experiences

The adoption entrance narratives shared by participants included commentary on adoptive parents' experiences of the adoption process. It appeared that these narratives also supported adoptive parents in making sense of adoption, related through their experiences of a fraught and problematic Social Welfare system. For example, Natasha and Dean discussed the anxiety their adoptive parents endured while waiting to formalise their adoptions. For Natasha, the significance and "wantedness" of her adoption was gleaned from her parents' articulation of their fight to keep her. This was in contrast to and highlighted by her parents' previous experience of trying to adopt a child they had fostered. Dean's empathetic commentary is of his own construction, based on what he learned from his birth father about his attempts to claim him:

> …I think at the end of the two years I was reissued a new birth certificate…and I think it was about then that they knew I was theirs so they felt secure then. I heard about a little Fijian boy that they weren't able to adopt, they didn't get to keep him, so I know that they had felt loss. And Dad basically say 'yep we're going to keep this one', I believe they sort of fought in some way, manner or form to adopt and keep me. (Natasha)

> …was it a birth certificate that I had to get for something and it came back saying adopted because I had two birth certificates. [The] full birth certificate said that I was adopted and it was dated 1969. So I think it took four or five [years] to actually go through. And I think that was particularly hard on my grandmother because I think it must have went through the courts and they were probably worried that the dad was going to come back and take me away and that's what I found out since I caught up with him and met him, that yeah they had tried to do that a couple of times. (Dean)

Natasha and Dean's quotes emphasise what their adoptive parents went through to secure their adoption, and their significant emotional investment. This presented their adoption in a positive light, and emphasised that they were very much wanted. The characterisation of adoptive parents and their efforts in entrance narratives is significant in positively reinforcing adoption and adoptees (Harrigan 2010, 32).

Ease of adoption–supply of/demand for Māori babies–colour-blindness

According to Lisa, Rachel, Kere, Shane and Sonya, the process of adoption was narrated in terms of its surprising ease and swiftness. Kere's mother noted a lunchtime conversation was all that was needed to instigate his brother's adoption: "And she said that she had a friend that worked at one of those agencies in the '70s and she'd expressed an interest in adopting a child, she said it at lunch one day and then the week later the woman rang up and said 'we've got one.' So Mum, they had to make a quick decision and that was my brother, yeah." To be able to adopt a child so easily speaks to the social conditions of that time, where women were scorned for having children outside of marriage and adoption was a socially sanctioned, albeit stigmatised, practice. The 1960s saw a surplus of babies for adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand, and a shortage of adoptive parents (Else 1991, 67).

Donna-Marie and Shane's adoptive parents' accounts highlight the extreme casualness of their adoption transfers.

> …when I my parents picked me up from the hospital, they didn't know where to go, so mum said 'just park up here.' [My adoptive father] said he would just go in and find out where to go and then come back and get her. She said he comes back to the car jumps in, plonks this baby on her lap and drives off. And she's like 'oh my gosh, don't they want to meet me, don't I have to sign something?' He's like 'nah, all done.' And she said it was just, so you've got a baby,

like a new life and there's just been no kind of care taken about this transfer, and I had feeding instructions pinned on me. (Donna-Marie)

…and so they applied, they were share-milkers in their mid-early 20s, and they'd got this phone call, we've got this child down in Lower Hutt, which is a fair old drive, 7 or 8 hours or whatever it is, and so they had to milk the cows, jump in the car, head off…and they turned up at the hospital and a nurse sort of dropped me in Mum's lap, there was some mention at some stage that I had Māori ancestry, but not much more than that, and so they're sitting there in this waiting room, and looking at me and then the nurse comes back and goes 'oh well so do you want him or not?' The only answer they could give was yes really, but they just thought it was very hard, cold, abrupt… I suspect they almost wanted to put them under duress to get em off the books basically, so they'd put them under pressure to make a decision. I just think there's a little bit more of an appropriate way to go about it, so that always rankled with Mum especially, she just thought that's just terrible, the way they went about it. So they then piled in the car and I was riding around in the back seat through the Desert Road, oh they gave them a bottle of carrot juice… (Shane)

Shane's reference to "get[ting] em off the books" is derived from his own adoption research and reading of Anne Else's book, in which the difficulty of placing Māori babies, particularly brown Māori boys, is discussed. Māori babies were perceived as "a glut of the wrong kind" at that time (Else 1991, 67, 74-5, 78).

In Sonya, Mere and Donna-Marie's narratives, the link between their "availability", "Māori-ness" and therefore speed and ease of adoption, was made specifically. Sonya's parents understood that a baby was offered to them very quickly, because they were willing to adopt a Māori baby:

My parents had been trying to have children for about 8 years and then when they made the decision to adopt…back then I think there was quite a few lots of kids becoming available. And I think it happened really quickly because Mum and Dad stated that they didn't mind if it was a Māori baby, they were happy to have a Māori baby so they got me very quickly.… (Sonya)

…and so when I asked her why she picked the Māori children she said because in the 60s there was quite an abundance of Māori children around. And so they were the easy picking ones I

> expect as opposed to trying to get a Pākehā lot, where there was probably more criteria involved, I'm not sure, but it would make sense. (Mere)

For Donna-Marie, the greater availability carried a particular meaning in terms of her value:

> So part of them being able to adopt me and adopt me quite quickly when they first made the application was, they didn't mind having a baby with Māori whakapapa, which she understood from the agencies meant that they got me quicker…The implication being that you were less in demand or less wanted.

Donna-Marie alludes to an awareness of the colour-coding of Māori children that was practiced by the Department of Social Welfare (discussed further in the Looking Māori section). Several parents (those of Sonya, Shane, Donna-Marie, Jenny and Rick) also specified their willingness to take a Māori baby when offered – simultaneously commenting on their child's ancestry, as well as taking up a "colour-blind" position.

> So this is her second marriage and this guy was sort of looking after her and she could only have this one other child and weren't able to have another one, so adoption was the option and then what happened was the lady said 'oh look, we've got a Māori boy who could be adopted' and my mother said 'I don't care what colour he was, we'll take him.' (Rick)

> But when my adopted mother was offered me, they said 'would you mind having a Māori baby?' and she was going 'no, just give me the baby, I just want a baby.' (Jenny)

Adoptive parents' accounts highlight the way in which the issue of race was broached with prospective adopters. A discourse of Māori babies as 'unadoptable' emerges from these narratives, reflecting the significance accorded to race and parentage in determining whether and which babies were desirable to prospective adopters. However, in the adoption entrance narrative, it is likely that these 'facts' are shared with adoptees to emphasise their wantedness, an extension of the Rescue narrative, and/or variation on the Chosen Child narratives. The stories told by Donna-Marie's and Shane's parents give a sense that they were 'handed over' all too easily, flippantly and without much care, which is particularly jarring in the context of such a highly significant event. Perhaps this intended to reinforce that the adopted child is in a better place than within a system or institution where they were clearly not valued?

The appeal to colour-blindness underscores parents' overwhelming desire to be parents no matter or in spite of their adopted child's race/ethnicity.[71] It also conveys that while Māoriness was not a criterion upon which an adopted child was chosen, it was not a criterion upon which they were rejected. The adoptive parents' good fortune at benefitting from an expedited process is credited to their willingness to be non-discriminatory in racial terms. Even so, the paradox of colour-blindness has the effect of reinforcing that the child's race *is* an issue that must be overlooked or ignored, a difference to be 'tolerated'. Colour-blindness, or the denial of the child's racial difference, is the condition that renders the child acceptable in transracial adoptive circumstances. Similarly to discourses regarding the pathologically curious adoptee (see Chapter Two, 24-5), these narratives may reinforce the unacceptability or 'problem' of the (non-compliant) race-conscious adoptee. Thus, even for those who were in fact 'adoptable' (those deemed not too dark or too marginal: Else 1991, 74), their Pākehā adoptive parents were compelled to manage or negotiate their racial difference discursively via their entrance narratives.

The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) constructed or positioned Māori adoptees as raced/racialised subjects, and this was simultaneously reproduced and denied in the colour-blind but also contradictory sentiments of adoptive parents' narratives. Messages about what it means to be Māori and adopted are thus transmitted very early on in the adoptee's life-course.

Adoptive parents' narratives were not necessarily interpreted as problematic by adoptees, until perhaps later in life (see "Being-adopted" and "Weighing up 'what if" sections); as with the Rescue narrative, and perhaps the flawed logic of the Chosen Child narrative, adoptees tended to receive these adoption entrance narratives on the basis of their intent, rather than their effects. Participants by and large understood that their adoptive parents meant well, and genuinely loved and wanted them in their families, even if their narratives were somewhat inadequate or simplistic.

Adoption entrance narratives: construction and meaning-making

Adoption entrance narratives tell the adoption story in a particular way, and have implications for how adoptees make sense of their adoption. Rescue focuses on the reasons for the child's relinquishment, positing the adoptive parents as the saviours and reinforcing that adoption is the logical and preferable scenario. The Chosen Child narrative and the subthemes of "specially picked child" and "fulfilling a need" correspond more to the adoptive act and reasons for the adoptive parents' actions, but also

[71] Else (1991, 75) attributes prospective adopters' strong statements of being "completely unconcerned about race" to a combination of "altruistic liberalism" and concerns about zero population growth emergent in the late 1960s. "A socially responsible couple should avoid having children and adopt instead, so as to rescue the children of the less responsible" (Else 1991, 53).

construct the adoptee as wanted and part of the family. Negative associations with these themes were not necessarily conveyed in participants' accounts of their adoption entrance and birth origin stories; it was not until they were asked about their experiences of being adopted that the constructions of "grateful" and "bad seed" adoptee,[72] and the shame of being rescued or saved were articulated. This observation is consistent with findings that adoptees process information about their adoptions differently according to developmental stage – the implications of certain 'facts' accepted at an early age might not be considered until later (Brodzinsky 1990, 12). By all accounts, adoption-related meaning-making and narrative construction continue throughout an adoptee's life-course (Grotevant et al. 2007, 79).

Although most participants' accounts included a combination of Rescue and Chosen Child narratives, some were less explicit regarding the reasons for relinquishment. While teenage pregnancy was divulged relatively openly, there were other circumstances surrounding conception that were not, only discovered later when participants made contact with their birth mothers. Jenny's mother's "messy" personal situation and relationships, and the abuses endured by Natasha and Emma's mothers (and implied in the case of Kere's mother) were not shared by (or known to) adoptive parents. Presumably in these cases, DSW played a role in withholding or censoring sensitive or difficult information from adoptive parents. Thus, the gaps in adoption entrance narratives may also be telling.

Post World-War II, secrecy was the prevailing communication dynamic in adoption (Galvin 2006b, 139). In Aotearoa New Zealand the law was silent on what items of information should be supplied to prospective adopters, leaving this to the discretion of the social worker, or other personnel involved (Else 1991, 96). Social workers were confronted with a variety of considerations in terms of what they might choose to share: the information needs of adopters to aid their decision, and inform them about the background or inheritance of their child; the needs of the child to know something of their background and the circumstances of their adoption, *save the 'dubious' details*; and the rights of birth parents to confidentiality. This meant that there was variability among social workers in the level of detail they revealed. However, it was rare for written material to be provided (Else 1991, 97-8). Participants in this study were adopted between the years of 1960 and 1976, a period in which there was a gradual "opening up" of adoption. This may account for the widespread disclosure of adoption

[72] See Chapter Two, 23-4 for mention of the rationale of adoption as liberating adoptees from the 'taint' of illegitimacy and 'bad blood', and the associated constructions of the grateful and bad seed adoptees. In a time when young, unwed mothers were determined to be morally compromised, and it was thought that those qualities were inherited, adoption promised a new beginning for the bastard child, and freedom from the stigma of illegitimacy. Adoption was therefore a primarily positive act. This discourse also gave rise to the 'pathological adoptee' (Chapter Two, 24-5), where to want to know about origins signified a failed adoption, and any departure from a happy, content and grateful demeanour was deemed to be pathological (Kim 2010, 255; Dragojilovic and Broom 2018, 91-2. 98-9, 104).

to participants, as well as the fact that for many, their visible racial and physical non-resemblance meant that their adoptive difference could not be obscured. The fact of always knowing about their adoption appeared to engender a degree of trust – apart from Dean, participants did not feel that anything was ever hidden from them. In combination with the Rescue and Chosen Child narratives, disclosure of the facts of adoption (the "one big talk": Galvin 2006b[73]) contributed to a favourable perspective of adoption.

As key actors in the adoption system, adoptive parents face a challenging task in constructing an entrance narrative, one replete with tension. There are two key dialectical tensions – interrelated but opposing forces that impose a strain on relationships – which adoptive parents struggle to narrate (Krusiewicz and Wood 2001, 792-3). Firstly, contradictory feelings about the adoption process relate to *misfortune versus fortune*: adoptive parents' excitement and joy relating to their new child while also feeling sad for the birth family's loss; and secondly, *desire versus rejection* relates to the tension experienced when explaining to children that they are wanted by their adoptive family, despite having been given up by their birth family. Adoptive parents attempt to address these dialectic tensions by representing the birth family's choices as loving or in the best interests of their child (Kranstuber 2008, 12; Else 1991, 103). Therefore, while Rescue and Chosen Child narratives make something of a contribution – in emphasising the adoptee's good fortune in being adopted out of less than optimal circumstances, and emphasising their being desired rather than rejected – they do not resolve what are, in actual fact, *the* dialectical tensions of adoption. These dialectical tensions persist in adoptee narratives about their experiences of being adopted. For example, participants narrated struggles with feeling rejected in spite of being loved and wanted by adoptive family, and some were compelled to to weigh up "what if?", and determine for themselves if on balance their adoption was the better option or outcome (see next chapter). What also appears to be largely missing or overlooked in these entrance narratives is discussion of the adoptee's loss.

At this very early stage in Māori adoptees' lives, altruistic and colonial discourses of adoption are being reproduced through the telling of the adoption entrance narrative (see also Kim 2010, 254-6), and Māori adoptees are also being constructed in various ways. An optimal mode of being-adopted-and-Māori, as determined by adoptive parents, and indirectly, the State and white society, is seeded

[73] The "one big talk" is part of past adoption practice, wherein a private parent-child "big talk" of revelation was sometimes the only discussion of the subject (Galvin 2006b, 143). "The prescribed versions of the "big talk" had a predictable focus – the joy of parents in gaining a child, specifically a "chosen child", an expression taken from the title of a 1939 children's book. Parents said little or nothing about why a child was available for adoption: they withheld painful or ugly information for the child's benefit. Over the past two decades, however, adoptive parents have been encouraged to engage their children in an ongoing dialogue rather than just the "big talk" because information professionals insisted that children need the story retold as they develop and encounter new questions (Brodzinsky, Singer and Braff 1984). Today adoptive parents are advised to mention adoption before a child is old enough to comprehend the concept in order to make it a safe topic for discussions. Current practice is to provide children with age-appropriate stories as they grow (Kranstuber 2008, 11)

here, in relation to constructions of the grateful adoptee, bad seed adoptee, pathological adoptee, and (non-compliant) race-conscious adoptee. Participants' engagement with these in the context of their experiences in their adoptive families are explored next.

Being-adopted

Initial analysis identified three primary themes relating to participants' experiences of being-adopted: that of being-different, being-without-connection-to-birth-family, and the experience of trauma. Further analysis suggested a meta-theme of loss produced by participants' initial relinquishment, these themes expressing that as well as further experiences of loss, perpetuated and reinforced through closed adoption. It made sense to reconfigure the themes in terms of the effects of the initial loss (giving rise to the experience of trauma, and the emotional legacy), and the subsequent losses in terms of ongoing disconnection from birth family informing a profound sense of adoptive difference.

The trauma of relinquishment

Rejection and abandonment, grief and loss

Eight participants cited feeling unwanted, rejected or abandoned by their birth mother and/or birth father. For Mere, there was no acceptable reason that could justify her mother's decision: "…I've always got that thing in my brain, she gave me away, my dad didn't give me away, *she* gave me away, and even though there's probably reasons around all of that and whatever, *she gave me away* [emphasis added]." The anger that Mere expressed was also felt by Dean upon learning that he was adopted by his maternal grandparents, as a teenager: "I probably felt angry, disappointed, just the things like, why did my mother not want me, that sort of thing."

Donna-Marie's feeling of rejection or abandonment began with her relinquishment, but compounded with the loss of subsequent father figures: "I had a close connection with my mum and then the adoptive father left, second abandonment, third abandonment when…my relationship with my stepfather quickly fell apart so it was like you're rejected by three fathers and the father thing all was a really huge deal." Donna-Marie also conflated the loss of her birth father with that of a deep cultural connection, a loss that grew in magnitude: "This whole birth parents, yearning for a father, just this incredible yearning for a connection with te ao Māori was all just rolled into this big massive need, and a lot of it was at a very personal level. It's not something I told anyone about, I didn't even know how to talk about it." Similarly, Emma's feeling of rejection was exacerbated by her adoptive mother's re-marriage. For Emma, this had an enduring impact on her self-worth: "I just had disregard

for everything because I felt as if, ok well my original birth mother didn't care for me, and now you've got somebody else, you don't care for me, why the fuck should I care for myself?"

Daniel turned his sense of abandonment and loss into something of a game, or a hopeful narrative. Representations of orphaned or abandoned boys in 1970s television programming resonated with Daniel:

> I always felt more of an orphan than a bastard…I didn't really feel like a bastard, but I did feel like an orphan, it's subtle but there's a difference…[Bastard is] not as bad as an orphan, I mean because then you've got no parents. But you still are an orphan in a sense though, to begin with anyway…that whole abandonment thing, all the heroes through TV or history… like Tarzan, abandoned, Elephant boy…the Wolf Boy, and all that kind of stuff, Batman. You know they were all abandoned so they were all heroes in a sense, so in a sense you felt that you had that capacity to be a hero I suppose or something.

Echoing dominant narratives that express scepticism about the adoptee's experience of loss, Shane found some vindication and explanation in the form of Nancy Verrier's Primal Wound thesis:

> Is there a scientific, bedrock kind of neurological explanation for this feeling of rejection? You know, you had good parents, they looked after you, they fed you, so you had all your needs met, what's the problem? And I think Nancy Verrier's explanation, the whole notion that the amygdala, the fight or flight is the most fully developed at birth, it's the only part of the brain that's complete, everything else gets wired up later, and that started to give me some confidence that yes there is a solid basis to say that rejection at that age has an impact, and there is other scientific research I found that bolstered her argument.

Shane's comment points to the importance of understanding or finding explanation for the feelings of rejection, perhaps because it flies in the face of 'common-sense' or dominant narratives. Seeking an alternative to that of the pathological adoptee, Shane finds a neurological explanation, with its basis in material reality, particularly compelling.

Seven participants spoke of the grief and/or loss associated with their having been given up for adoption. In Rick and Daniel's cases, this emerged as anxiety and insecurity soon after their adoptions (as reported by their adoptive parents to them). For Shane "whenever it came up, there was always this grief, a feeling of grief around [adoption]." Nor was adoption loss singular; for example, Rua spoke of grieving for the losses of multiple disconnections, simultaneously, including her missing-ness, being

lost to, as well as having lost, someone or something: "…That kind of connection eh. Cos people don't usually understand that, don't even have a great word for that feeling, but there's something missing. I used to call it lost. It's being cut off right from the start as a baby. So it's not only disconnection from your mother but it's disconnecting from your whakapapa and your whenua and everything like that." For others, grief for their adoption loss re-emerged with other losses, well into adulthood.

The emotional legacy

Where feelings of rejection, grief and loss were mentioned by approximately half of the participants, all but one referred to the enduring emotional sequelae of having been given up for adoption. These are largely narratives that have formed in later life, as participants have reflected on and made some sense of their experiences. The profundity of this emotional legacy is highlighted by Shane: "Yeah it goes right to the heart of what it means to be human really, just that fundamental relationship with your mother, with the person who brought you into the world, and you rupture that and you're rupturing something pretty bloody dangerous in terms of that person's development, and every subsequent relationship."

As noted earlier, three participants' emotional responses soon after their relinquishment were noted by their carers and relayed to them. Emma linked her relinquishment and adoption to later personal relationships:

> …it was 6 weeks before I was adopted so I was in hospital, the nurses there had said that I was a lovely baby but I was incredibly disruptive, and so they had to put me in isolation. So I think that had I been like raised by my natural mother in a natural way, I still think I would have been really quite a quirky kid, but I think that that lack of intimate contact in the formative part of my life has actually destabilised my ability to have intimate relationships. I have a predisposition to thinking that it's gonna finish and so I will cut my nose off to spite my face.

Besides not invoking feelings of loss or rejection, Emma suggests that there is a naturalness inherent in biological parenting that might accommodate or even normalise individual idiosyncrasies.

Donna-Marie and Natasha also noted the enduring impact of adoption in their personal relationships. Donna-Marie attributed this to a lesser sense of felt security: "Yeah most of the time I feel very good and strong and robust but there's real fragility there… I don't know whether every kid goes through that or whether for adoptees it's just a bit more pronounced, your sort of feeling of

fragility in the world or you've kind of not go too many sources of security around you." According to Natasha, a fear of abandonment has had significant effects on her relationships:

> My personal relationships are shocking. So I've done all the reading, all the psychotherapy, and it's always about my personal relationships, major abandonment issues. I haven't been able to stick at a relationship beyond six years and there was a cycle there and I don't know if it's just youth, that they were only ever for 18 months…and you know the bad baby book…you go through life believing you must have been a bad baby, that's why you were given up…and I know when I start to have my own triggers around abandonment and people leaving…I'd do the whole drama in the head thing and over-dramatise it and sometimes I'd sabotage too you know, to see if they would leave, stupid stuff.

Both Emma and Rick went on to struggle with substance addiction in later life, in part to do with their adoption. Shane noted struggles with depression and anxiety, and an enduring "hypervigilance" around others, in which he was scanning for and anticipating possible rejection. Similarly, Rachel, Lisa and Rua noticed their tendency to maintain emotional distance from others and then disconnect easily.

Emma counts adopted people among those who are "severely traumatised." She does not believe that trauma can ever be completely obviated, simply managed: "…as with anything, if you can work through your trauma, I don't think you ever get rid of it, I think you work through it, I think you learn how to manage it, so yeah, there are times when I bawl myself to sleep." Six participants have sought professional help to work through their personal issues, and the emotional legacy of being adopted. However, while this was reported as mostly productive for people, Shane reported that some counsellors did not have the skill or knowledge to know how to work with adoptees.

Being-different (adoptive difference)

Participants who were told of their adoptive status were aware that this made them different in an important way. However, the significance of this was not fully understood until they were older. For the majority of participants, their adoptive difference was coded, received and internalised as special, chosen or unique, reflecting and carrying over from the discourses of their adoption entrance narratives. For some others, this was not the case. For Kere, *not* being spoken of as chosen or special signified his being part of and loved by his family. He was not treated differently, rather 'absorbed' as 'normal': "I'm just someone's normal child. So, I was never treated any differently, I just had a normal upbringing…"

Conversely, the framing of Daniel's adoption in terms of non-specific duty and charity by his parents conveyed to him a negative sense of difference, which was reinforced later in a public 'outing' of his adoptive status by his adoptive father: "I think one of the 'nicest' surprises was my father used to be part of Rotary so he'd have to introduce his son and yeah I found it quite gut wrenching when they referred to me as their adopted son rather than 'my son' but I understood it because he'd call a spade a spade, that's how he saw it…it was quite gutting because you'd go round the circle of kids, it would be father son day and you'd be the only one sort of called that…I remember that."

Sadly, for two participants, their adoptive difference was tainted considerably by the experience of sexual abuse within their adoptive families. Rick recalled being an insecure young boy following his adoption at 18 months old, and it was in the moments of being consoled by his adoptive father, that he was also sexually abused: "Unfortunately I was also very sort of unstable. Yeah depression isn't the right word – insecure, so insecure. So I cried a lot in the mornings and I was a bed wetter for many years and in those cryings, it was through those moments that my father came to look after me, you know in the bed, and he was a sexual abuser…and that's all a by-product of the adoption, okay the abuse, being involved in a European family where I may be loved in a very maybe in a sense indifferent and indecent way."

For Rick, the abuse produced a mode of being in his adoptive family that he describes as "satelliting": "So that whole adoption scenario was, I still saw them as my parents but I actually saw them as someone that I satellited off if you like, out here, because that's all I could do because I didn't want to be friggin' anywhere near them because it was too false."

Mere's stepfather exploited her adoptive status to justify and blame her for the abuse. The message conveyed to Mere was that she owed a debt of gratitude for being adopted, and the payment was being sexually available to him:

> When mum got pregnant, that really changed in the house and so because I was adopted, I blamed myself and then I must have been craving for attention or some shit, so when the abuse and all of that stuff happened, I thought that that's what I was there for, and so I had a lot of that stuff going on, lots of shit really…and so the stepfather saying that, 'you owe your mother and she can't because she's pregnant now'…and so it sort of felt like I was responsible to make sure that everything was, cos otherwise the family would be split again.

Similarly to Rick, Mere perceives her racial and adoptive difference as playing a part in her exploitation and abuse:

> Yeah, because if I wasn't adopted…maybe I wouldn't have felt like I owed anybody, you're always feeling like you owe, you're always forever grateful and ever blessed, but you owe. As a child, you grow up and you hear one thing and it can play on your mind and become such an image really. I sort of blame the fact that I'm adopted on the fact that I got abused I guess, because I think if I'd been white, it might not have happened (crying), 'she's only the dark girl, the Māori girl, she doesn't matter', all that sort of stuff…

When I was interviewing Rick and Mere about their experiences of being adopted, my immediate response to their disclosure of their abuse was to think that in the context of that abuse, their adoption issues would pale into insignificance. However, both Rick and Mere were able to identify distinct effects of adoption and abuse, whilst also acknowledging their inextricable connection and their compounded effects. They both spoke to the role that their adoptive and racial difference played in making them a target for abuse, as well as the vulnerability (low self-worth and the tenuousness of their belonging/family membership) that adoption produced, which was able to be exploited. The abuse then resulted in a loss of safety, security and trust in the adoptive home (Nowlan 2016, iii).

Kere's adoptive difference was the focus of bullying that he and his adopted brother endured at school: "My brother and I were bullied, we went to a small Catholic school…a lot of my memories around adoption were that we were bullied for being adopted. And so I guess, the Catholic community's a pretty tight community, and everyone knows everyone…and I'm just surmising that the parents would have said to the kids 'they're a couple of bastard kids those ones.' And so we used to get ['you're a bastard'] a bit. And…'your parents didn't love you'." Kere felt that this social stigmatisation had contributed to his brother's melancholy and alcoholism in later life, and that it forced them both into a position of needing to fight to stand up for themselves: "My brother and I grew up fighting." Kere's characterisation of himself and his brother as fighters reflects their adoption experience as fighting against marginalisation, and for legitimacy. Rick also characterised himself in this way, a likely gendered self-articulation to counter being subject to external, discursive and social forces (Adler et al. 2015, 481), and the experience of symbolic as well as physical violence.

Special and chosen versus lucky or fortunate

Associated with, but distinct from, being spoken of as special or chosen within the adoptive family, was that of being cast as "lucky" or fortunate by those outside.[74] Whereas the former terms were largely

[74] Although luck carries a sense of randomness, mere chance, "luck of the draw", it shares a common link with fortune and being chosen, to destiny or fate.

seen as positive, the connotations of the latter terms were not appreciated by several participants. For Paul, comments about his being lucky to be adopted resulted in feelings of shame: "…quite ashamed, quite like, oh I probably would never have said a second class citizen but actually I couldn't help but think that…[that came from] oh probably things that you've been rescued or saved or you're lucky..." Here Paul is reluctant to concede that he was "just lucky", or that his birth origins were necessarily a worse option. As Paul elaborates later, lucky implies being saved or rescued, and adoption "[giving] you something that you may not have had."

Similarly to Paul, Rachel reported frequent comments from others about her good fortune or luck in being adopted into a loving family. For Rachel, as accurate as that sentiment might be, it could not mitigate the loss she experienced from being adopted:

> But it is nice to have that acknowledgement eh that there is those feelings there and that is that loss there because when I was growing up people would always say to me 'yeah but you are really lucky to be in a loving family' and I was. But it never took away that feeling of loss. And for people to hear that you feel pain when you're in a good happy family, it must be hard for them or confusing for them to understand that concept…They want to reassure you, they want to let you know that everything's okay but really, you don't know my life, you don't know how I'm feeling, you don't know how I've been.

Rachel's quote also illustrates the difficulty that people have in comprehending the co-existence of loss while living in a happy adoptive family, reinforcing the notion of adoption as a cure-all.

Participants reacted to several negative connotations of the 'lucky' and 'fortunate' narratives imposed by others, which included: who would they have been if it were not for adoption?; there is no loss, only gain and to focus on loss is ungrateful; and they ought to be grateful for their 'rescue'. The implications are indicative of prevailing narratives that construct adoptees as "the bad seed", flawed or coming from flawed origins, needing rescue or redemption. Furthermore, it suggests that there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to *be* adopted – i.e. a grateful adoptee is preferable to an "ungrateful" adoptee. As such it is important to question how it is possible for adoptees to articulate experiences that contravene "acceptable" notions. Shame may result from being constructed as in need, and from being castigated for not feeling or thinking the "right" way about one's adoptive circumstances (Blake 2013, 132-3).

Charity/duty has similarly negative connotations and says more about the adoptive parents than the adoptee. Adopting because it is the right and good thing to do is not specific to the child, and in

the context of a religious family, a 'service' extended to others in need. The implication that "we did something good for you" potentially leads to a feeling of indebtedness, and expectations of gratitude.

Lacking resemblance (difference from adoptive-family)

In addition to adoptive parents' narratives, participants' bodies speak to their adoptive difference, and their biological origins elsewhere. A lack of resemblance to adoptive family was noted specifically by all but two participants. This centred primarily on physical differences. For Rick and Donna-Marie, their lack of physical resemblance was epitomised in a family photograph:

> I didn't look the same, in my mum's family lots of my cousins could be each other's siblings, there's a very strong family look. And so every family photo it's just like 'who's the neighbour's kid, did the neighbour's kid get in the frame?'" (Donna-Marie)

> [Referring to family photo] Here goes my brother, what was he 5'10", he's long ginger hair, Irish mother, 4'9", my father's 5'6" and then on the end there's this 6'2" Māori. 'Oh is that what people see?' because when you look out of these eyes, I don't see that. I only see what's around me so I automatically compare myself to the same, as everyone else, but it's not until you see a reflection that you realise 'oh, that's what I look like' and it was hard to comprehend…I'd never seen that. I didn't recognise it…everyone else around me was white. I never saw myself… (Rick)

Shane's account conveys something of the "alien-ness" of non-resemblance: "…as an adoptee you've got nothing, you're just floating around out in the dark, you know? There's nobody that looks like you, I can remember distinct moments where I was standing in the bathroom, looking in the mirror, trying to figure, just looking at my face and where's my nose come from, where do my eyes…you know? And nothing to go off…"

Participants recognised that the belonging and resemblance derived from biological or genetic connection is distinct, and it was what Lisa sought specifically after becoming aware of its absence in her life:

> I had a partner in the 90s, who came from quite a close family and like you could see that they were all related and at some point when I met an aunt or uncle or someone, it just hit me, 'the reason you guys look the same is you are genetically related to each other'. And it had never really occurred to me up until that point that I didn't know anyone who I was genetically related

> to, like I looked like my mum but that was coincidence…that kind of made me sad when I realised that, that was the first time I realised that there was something slightly different about being adopted, and I was in my 20s.

Lisa's sadness is indicative of her feelings of loss; in this case seeing the genetically-based physical resemblance among others reinforced what she lost in the course of her adoption. Rachel articulated a very strong desire for physical resemblance, in part because she "never had that", but also because of the 'real-ness' of that connection: "…the one thing that I always looked for was family traits, even today like I always look for people to look like me cos I never had that. Like I really crave it and it's something that I'm really envious of my friends and family who have it. And like whenever anyone says 'oh gosh you look like just such and such' it was like 'yeah that's a real thing'…"

Furthermore, a lack of physical resemblance invited questioning and queries from people – attention that was not always appreciated. Participants who did not resemble their adoptive family felt continually compelled to explain and discuss their adoptive difference to others, their non-resemblance was a very visible 'giveaway'. Twelve of the participants in this study were adopted by Pākehā mothers and fathers, which meant that for many there was a visible racial/ethnic difference:

> Yeah well Pākehā family so when you're large and brown I mean it's pretty obvious, and that had its ups and downs… all the years I had to answer 'why are your parents white?' and being unable to articulate it properly. (Paul)

> I remember going to my nana's birthday and I was the only black kid in the room, I could see nana's friends pointing at me 'who is that one?' I don't know if they were saying it but that's what it feels like and you can see their eyes and everything and…I don't feel comfortable in every area. Because there's always been someone judging me. (Rua)

Although not discussed or explained in detail, physical resemblance appeared to be a very powerful indicator of belonging for participants – physically resembling others bestowed a feeling of "fitting in", and was deemed a marker of biological or genetic connectedness. Participants' conceptualisations thus correspond directly with Western European constructions of kinship and family – where genetic connectedness is regarded as the basis for family bonds, underpinned by the assumption that a resemblance (physical and non-physical) exists between parent and offspring (Isaksson, Sydsjo, Skoog Svanberg and Lampic 2019, 38; Becker, Butler and Nachtigall 2005, 1301).

It is this cultural ideology of family and physical resemblance that led to 'matching' being sought in adoption placements – the rationale was that similarities between adoptive parents and children facilitate greater harmony and happiness. Achieving "goodness of fit" between adoptees and adoptive parents increased the likelihood of a successful adoption and a child's ability to thrive (McRoy, Grotevant and Zurcher Jr 1988, 8). In light of adopting parents in Aotearoa New Zealand being predominantly non-Māori (Else 1991, 187), for children born to Māori birth parents, the likelihood of a match was significantly less. Indeed, the majority of participants in this study reported not physically resembling their adoptive families. The three who noted some resemblance to either their adoptive parents or siblings (Lisa, Jenny, Natasha) reported this very positively, but it did not obviate their need for biologically-based resemblance (resemblance through nature privileged over resemblance through nurture: Isakkson et al. 2019, 40).

Five participants (Lisa, Rachel, Emma, Shane, Sonya) spoke specifically of yearning to look like someone; Lisa and Rachel supposed that it yields a deeper, fuller connection with others, something they longed for, it was the subject of Sonya's birth family fantasies, and Shane felt that it would give him a sense of where he comes from. Thus, the significance of physical resemblance to participants is three-fold: it promises to support relational intimacy, as well as membership to a "naturally constituted" family, and through that, the establishment of biogenetic identity (the identity arising from the biogenetic history of two biological family lines, linking a child to parents, but also to family ancestors: Bonaccorso 2009, 110). Orientation to nature is what gives biological connectedness its authority (Hoffman-Reim 2016, 260), reinforced in Rachel's use of the word "real" to refer to the connection and identity that physical resemblance carries.

Lacking information and biological connection

Growing up without knowledge of, or contact with, birth family had a profound effect on participants' lives, sense of self and identity. This was discussed in two key ways: "not knowing" and "lacking a biological connection." Interestingly, participants' narratives around these two sub-themes largely referred to being-Māori, although not wholly. Background information that was desired by participants ranged from "matter of fact", such as medical history (Mere, Jenny), to their birth mother's "off-the-record" story and experience of pregnancy, labour and birth (Emma, Rachel), and her reasons for relinquishment (Shane, Rachel). In Rachel's case, seeking further non-identifying information from DSW gave some of these answers, but "started the grieving process…of having that inner struggle with a feeling like where am I in the place of this world, like what does it really mean?" Without knowledge of family, she felt "not like a loose unit but just a little bit kind of floaty and not really knowing anything…*really knowing* myself and really accepting myself."

Similarly, Lisa felt that she could not really or truly be known by others, without a familial or biological connection: "It felt like I missed a physical connection as well even though I don't know what that would have felt like to grow up in a family where I was physically connected to people or biologically…I guess I wanted to know people who I could say, not that I particularly believe in biological determinism, but 'you are like this and you are like this' and that's because I carry some of the same material as you."

Drawing on literary representations of the orphan (see earlier comments on page 110), including the following implicit reference to Pinocchio, Daniel felt that without a biological or birth mother, he was not a "real boy." For Rick, adoption was connected to ownership and subsequent denial of the 'natural order'. Furthermore, loss of biological connection through adoption constitutes a significant rupture of what ought to be "whole":

> …but what happens is that we end up with ownership of that person and then you start saying 'he's mine, she's mine, and that family that grew this person, the biology have nothing to do with it'. But for mine, when did the apple tell the tree what to do? Never. The tree's always been there, the tree of life, the whole biology of the line has to be acknowledged and even if you're adopted into this here and you get given that life, from a biological perspective your bodily side of it is being cued in from back here but your spiritual essence has to be all of the whole and you've got to tie those things together.

Without knowledge of his "real" biological origins, Rick felt he lacked strength and stability and an "anchored-ness" of self to withstand outside challenges: "I knew a lot about my adoptive parents, but nothing about the real me…cos I used to get pushed from pillar to post in the sense of who am I and adoption, if we hark back to that, it really erodes that sense of identity, and you can identify with this (gesturing to picture of adoptive family), but it's not real, you are transplanted now." Here Rick is challenging directly the discourses surrounding closed adoption, and the 'fiction' of adoptive kinship.

Adopted siblings

Seven participants grew up with siblings who were also adopted, however, this shared experience did not appear to alleviate or lessen their feeling of adoptive difference within the family. Commonly, participants compared their own experience with that of their adopted siblings', and more often than not, their siblings' polar opposite response. This puzzled several participants – that despite being raised in the same adoptive environment, with similar messages around adoption, their sibling did not develop the same positionality towards being-adopted. Kere recounted that his adopted brother would "never

talk about adoption" while he would "always talk about adoption." Kere explained this difference in terms of his broader observation of adoptees as either in denial about their adoption or open to discussion, and his perception that his brother felt "utterly rejected." For all participants growing up with adopted siblings, irrespective of ethnic similarities or differences, surprisingly, there was little or no dialogue between them about adoption. This may have reinforced a sense of isolation, and magnified the feeling of difference.

Disenfranchised grief and pathological adoptees

Trauma and grief are revealed as ubiquitous experiences in adoption literature (Peña 2017, 199). Grief or intense sorrow is part of a normal reaction to, and process of, dealing with a loss. An acute sense of loss can arise from separation from meaningful relationships, either temporary or permanent (Courtney 2000, 33). Adoption invariably involves loss; for adoptees, the primary loss is that of the connection with birth parents, but also includes loss of biological connection, and loss of status as a 'normal' member of (bionormative) society (Brodzinsky, Schehter and Marantz Henig 1993, 142). Thus, distinct from other losses, adoption loss is "more pervasive, less socially recognised, and more profound" (Brodzinsky, Schechter and Marantz Henig 1993, 9). The scepticism regarding adoptee grief and loss stems from assumptions that i) for grief to be experienced there must be some form of attachment to the person who has been lost (Courtney 2000, 33) and ii) infants adopted at birth are relinquished presumably before a mother-child attachment can form (Davidson 2010, 22).[75]

> It's hard for them to understand isn't it, that this little baby is going to grow up and have all these complex kind of emotional issues (Rachel)

Thus, adoption loss brings about a form of "disenfranchised grief", experienced by birth parents and adoptees because their relationship is not recognised and their loss not acknowledged, socially

[75] Betty Lifton (1994) and Nancy Verrier (1993) were well known proponents of infants' pre-verbal consciousness of separation, arguing that regardless of age or ability to articulate this loss, it was nonetheless experienced (Blake 2013, 139). Others such as Nickman (1985, 1996) also find support for this theory in their clinical work with adoptees. Courtney (2000, 37) states that "babies do not need understanding or awareness to experience a feeling." Smith and Brodzinsky (2002, 214) suggest that for those adopted as infants, the loss of birth parents is first felt when adoptees begin to understand the meaning of adoption, between the ages of 6-7. Arguments over the 'actuality' or 'realness' of adoption loss are not at issue in this thesis – it is sufficient for adoptee participants to identify, interpret and narrate grief and loss as significant and real to them. What this thesis is more concerned with is the lived experiences that give rise to these feelings and interpretations – adoptees *were* separated from their biological parents and families; that is an 'actual' fact. The fact that their experiences of that event are mediated by emotion, interpretation or perhaps by societal narratives/discourse does not make that event and experience any less 'real'. Experience as part of empirical reality, the events of relinquishment and adoption as 'actual' reality, and narratives of deserving or disenfranchised loss/grief are linked to the deeper structures of reality – adoptees are thus responding to these levels of reality simultaneously, and expressing/making sense of these in their narratives.

validated or publicly mourned (Doka 1989, xv). With emphasis placed on what is gained in adoption and not what is lost (adoption as a "problem-solving event filled with joy": Silverstein and Kaplan 1982, 49), there is little opportunity or support for adoptees to express their grief (Brodzinsky 2011, 204). Subsequently, adoptees may not only avoid doing so, but also feel guilt and shame for their 'illegitimate' anguish (Kauffman 2002, 62-3). Furthermore, it is common for adoptees to internalise their relinquishment as rejection, to conclude that they were in some way undeserving or not worthy of their birth parents' love and care (Silverstein and Kaplan 1982, 48; Cooper 2002, 268-9: see Emotional Legacy section). Not only is this grief pathologised, but adoptees' negative feelings about their relinquishment and adoption are also challenged. The construction of the self-absorbed, neurotic or pathological adoptee locates the 'problem' within the psychological diagnostics of the subject, rather than societal structures or discourse. Moreover, normative expectations that adoptees ought to feel like "grateful, successful and content citizens" make no room for the discursive articulation of shame, guilt, low self-esteem, anger and such (Dragojilovic and Broom 2017, 104).

Both of these phenomena tell us something important about the deep structures at play in adoption. By denying social recognition to "non-traditional or unsanctioned" relationships, disenfranchised grief functions to strengthen the traditional family (Kamerman 1993, 282, 284; Davidson 2010, 9). A form of "affective politics" that denies negative adoptee feelings about their adoption also keeps adoptees in a constrained and marginal position (Kim 2010, 122; Eng 2010, 109). Such pathologisation was noted by several participants – these experiences will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Being-adopted-and-Māori

A significant portion of participants' talk about being adopted related to their experiences of being Māori. Being-Māori whilst growing up in the adoptive family or prior to meeting birth whānau, was experienced in two ways directly related to lack of biological information and connection – as primordial, but also heavily contested.

Being-primordially-Māori

Blood quantum and blood ties

Three participants shared that their biological parents' blood quantum was specified in the adoption information.[76] For each of these participants, the fraction of their Māori-ness has subsequently

[76] Other participants did not refer to their 'fraction', which may be to do with the fact that blood quantum has largely fallen out of favour as a mode of defining Māoriness, and also that this was not asked about specifically.

occupied a significant place in their thinking of themselves as Māori (see next chapter), i.e. whether they are more or less than, or equivalent to "half-caste" and whether their fraction is an accurate estimation of their Māori ancestry. Daniel spoke about identifying with "half-caste" figures because he thought about himself in these terms: "I mean they were heroes to everyone but in particular to me they were the brown skinned ones, sort of thing. So yeah Elephant Boy…Kwai Chang Cain, anything half-caste yeah."

The primitive connotations of "ethnic blood" were foremost in Jenny's mind as a result of her ex-mother-in-law's preoccupations: "My first mother-in-law, she was a white settler from Zimbabwe who had immigrated to New Zealand and I married her only son…her son runs off with this little Māori girl and she was always going on about blood. 'Blood's thicker than water you know, you just don't know what's going to come out because you get blood' and she was horrible…and I began to think 'oh what if something comes out, what is it in me that's going to spring out, you know some fierce warrior kind of thing?'"

There were a number of other references to "blood" made by participants, predominantly in terms of "blood ties" as constituting the highest order of relationship and connection. Thus, the absence of these blood relationships was a significant part of the adoption experience, as noted by two-thirds of participants in the "lack of biological or blood connection" sub-theme. Even though Natasha felt fortunate to have been raised with her adoptive father's whakapapa, it did not replace the biological connections: "And that was also part of the adoption stuff, while I didn't have my whakapapa, I got given a whakapapa which is great, but I didn't have the blood one."

Jenny noted that blood ties imply a sense of belonging, and Natasha also conceived of blood ties as connecting her to land: "I bought in Foxton Beach, I bought a house and I went '*ka pai* (good), this is nice' but I didn't know then that it was my blood, my blood ran through there and I was like 'mm, interesting'." Natasha implies the existence of a connection and therefore belonging and comfort through whakapapa, felt despite not knowing of her birth whānau's mana whenua in that area.

Looking Māori

A number of participants knew that they were Māori based on how they looked. In Shane's case, while his appearance was ambiguous, there were other physical markers of his Māori ethnicity: "They noticed on the small of my back the Mongolian blue spot,[77] Dad used to joke that I had a black arse,

[77] 'Mongolian blue spots' are a form of birthmark that are more common in people with dark skin, including people of African, East Indian or Asian descent. They may appear on the lower back, on the arms or trunk. Else (1991, 74-5) notes that social workers would check for Mongolian blue spots to check that birth mothers were truthful about their child's non-Pākehā ancestry/parentage.

but yeah so that was kind of evidence of something." Early accounts of Natasha's appearance as a baby identified some 'non-white' physical features: "So I read things [in my DSW file] like I was given the name Baby Black, in the hospital. Is that a racist thing or is that a Social Welfare thing?" Natasha may be correct on both counts. "Baby Black" quite possibly related to the colour-coding system in use by some Child Welfare offices in the 1960s, to aid matching with prospective parents. Black card files were used to indicate adoptive applicants who would be willing to adopt a mixed race baby (Else 1991, 79).

Rachel, Paul, Rua, Rick, Mere and Jenny mentioned being visibly Māori. Paul (Tāhere) and Rua had also both been given Māori first names by their adoptive parents:

> So growing up in Dunedin in that working class environment, being the only Māori boy and there was only one other Māori family in the area, I got called nigger, black arse, sambo, all the time growing up… (Rick)

> …when you look Māori and you've got a Māori name there's an expectation… (Rua)

Mere noticed her and her adopted brother's ethnic difference within their adoptive family, but felt that early on it didn't make a difference: "I mean I know we were a different colour, but growing up as a child, it didn't really make much difference, I still had lots of cousins, they were all white but we still did lots of family things and things like that…" Things changed when her adoptive father died and an abusive stepfather moved in. Mere's ethnicity was treated differently in this new household, and she came to think of her skin colour and visible 'Māori-ness' in a more negative way (as discussed earlier).

Jenny thought of herself as looking Māori, somewhere on a spectrum of 'brown-ness' with her Pasifika adopted brothers and sisters: "…we're all different ethnicities, but we all have brown eyes, brown hair, most of us have brown skin of some state or varying degrees." At school Jenny was exposed to negative comments about being Māori, which focused on aspects of her appearance: "In my teens people would start calling me *hāpuka* (groper) lips or you know just some derogatory kind of terms, I thought 'oh maybe there is something different between Māori and Pākehā' but at primary school and intermediate school never thought of it as any different…"

As a child Donna-Marie's looks, in conjunction with her adoption into a well-known Māori family meant that she was accorded a Māori identity by others: "So this whole Māori thing became a real thing, but because my Māori family that adopted me…is a big family, they are well known…and I wasn't so white in those days…not really involved in anything Māori at all but there is some kind of recognition of that identity because you are loosely connected to that family and people know who

they are, you know, good or bad." However, Donna-Marie recounts that as she grew older and her skin lighter, she found herself open to microinsults from others about whether she was Māori based on her looks: "…so then comes the…'are you really Māori' and I'm like 'what do you mean?' She said 'oh it's just that you're so white'. I mean there's like a million white Māori everywhere you know, it's not like I'm some strange person that they never seen before."

A number of participants did not see themselves as Māori growing up. It was not uncommon for participants to perceive themselves as resembling their adoptive family, until they were faced with their appearance to the contrary in photographs or the mirror. Looking back at childhood photos, Emma's visible Māori ethnicity is apparent, even though it was not apparent to her at the time: "I never thought of myself as Māori though. I look back at the photos of me as a kid and I'm like, 'you're fucking Māori, look at you…"

Although Dean did not find out about his Māori father until he was between 13 and 14, prior to that, Māori children at school had told him that he was their cousin. Dean did not see himself as Māori primarily because he was unaware of his adoption, but also because of his perception of himself as different from the Māori kids at school: "Yeah and I'm sort of thinking 'well how can I be your cousin you know? I'm not as black as you' (laughing)…I probably looked different to the other [Māori] kids at school."

Kere's observation of his 'whiteness' was discussed in relation to his adopted brother's 'brownness': "My brother and I have been told from day dot. Now I'm white and he's brown, the fact that he's brown [our adoption's] obvious but you'd never know we weren't the natural kids, you know." Sonya was aware that she didn't look like her parents, but she did not *know* that she was Māori until she was 10 years old. Similarly to Mere, Sonya had very few Māori in her life that she could look to or talk with. Consequently, she didn't know what being Māori *meant*:

> And because I didn't look like my parents…I never even knew probably until I was like 10 that I was Māori. I had no idea. I didn't know what that meant, I didn't know anybody who was Māori, I didn't know what that was. I was just [my adoptive parents' daughter]. And so that was quite a revelation to me, and it made me feel different…And then I think I went and asked my cousins, who were Māori as well. Um, their father was Māori and they distinctively looked Māori, but I mean, I don't think as a kid I had any understanding of what that was.

Despite it being communicated to Lisa that she was not Māori, other Māori appeared to interact with her as if she was, based on her interests and looks: "My areas of research interest were starting to creep into Māori topics or topics that Māori had an interest in as well, so I was doing research on *harakeke*

(flax), and people just made the assumption, if you're doing that work, you look the way you do…" While Lisa's parents' denial that she was Māori appeared to have significantly influenced her view of herself, she was socially assigned Māori ethnicity by others, based on her physical appearance. This emphasises the significance of visible Māoriness as an identity marker 'out in the world', irrespective of the workings of transracial adoption that might deny, overlook or 'de-race' Māori adoptees.

Innate and extant independent of knowledge

Eight participants talked about being Māori as something they felt, inside themselves. In Lisa's case, this 'knowing' existed despite not being able to verify Māori descent: "We knew nothing about my birth father, so their only surprise when I found out, which wasn't really a surprise, was that my father was from *Ngāi Tahu*[78]…Yeah, it was a surprise for my parents, it wasn't a surprise for me."

Rachel reported a similar feeling associated with being Māori: "I knew there was something in me that I really connected with being Māori and it's just something that I couldn't explain but it was just something that I always felt like it was in me…[Being Māori means] being diverse and being just really whoever you want to be and it doesn't matter what anyone says to you, it's just yeah having that innate sense. Someone said to me once 'you know, you were Māori before you were born'." This last sentiment shared by Rachel is important for her as an adoptee – providing some reassurance that no matter what happened at birth or soon afterwards, she was, is and always will be Māori by virtue of her whakapapa.

Like Rachel and Lisa, Sonya discussed gravitating towards Māori, and arriving at a philosophical position that she always was and *is* Māori:

> I don't think it was any one specific thing, I think that it was like I just…gravitated towards those people, I don't know, it was almost like a likeness I suppose, maybe I potentially thought I was missing something.
>
> I don't know what it's like not to be [Māori] so even though I said when I was younger I didn't know what that meant, like I didn't even transition from I didn't know what that meant into I now am, it just happened, so I suppose if I look at it from a philosophical point of view I always

[78] Ngāi, Ngāti and Ngā are common prefixes for tribal groups' names, added to ancestral names. Ngāi Tahu are the tribal group of much of the South Island.

> was, so…my whole life is, it's weird to say like a Māori life because it kind of isn't in many ways, but in many ways it is…

According to Sonya, being Māori is a matter of fact regardless of what is known or not known. Wanting to know her whakapapa was stimulated by being told she was Māori, but this corresponded with a deep internal drive. The use of the word "renaissance" implies that this was a revived, renewed or re-ignited interest: "I think [I wanted to know my whakapapa] because it must have been a seed that had been planted, from when I was age 10 and people said I was different, and then someone told me I was Māori, and I think somewhere in me…I almost think it was a renaissance thing for me, I wanted to know my whakapapa. It's not like I wanted to belong, cos I already knew where I belonged, but it was a longing, not a belonging, a longing."

Mere makes similar comments about the existence of whakapapa despite not knowing: "I guess we had that, but we never knew it, and even though it's there, and it's always there …" Mere feels that she always had a sense or knowing related to things Māori – what felt right or not (tikanga), and that the basis of this was justified or uncovered later in life as she learned more about te ao Māori.

According to Kere, his feeling of being Māori is spiritual and a form of longing – it has always been there in spite of (or perhaps because of) his circumstances being brought up by Pākehā and not having access to his birth father's identity or whakapapa: "I've got to tell you though that the Māori draw in the spirit is all I can say, has been there all my life. Yep, most definitely a sense of spirit, even when I haven't chased it the longing is there." Kere feels a connection to things Māori and would like to access his 'full' connection via knowledge of whakapapa. However, he maintains that he is no less Māori for not having this knowledge or connection, in direct opposition to those who would suggest otherwise: "And that's the key. So you are connected but your connection isn't the same as that person's connection, yep…But we're taught that to be Māori you have to be that, well that's just not true. That's just not true."

Rua spoke of an inherent 'knowing', connected to the whenua, and related directly to being Māori:

> So as a kid I used to collect *kōhatu*[79] (stones, rocks) and I'd bring them home, we had a bach and one of the beaches was littered with crystal like quartz…used to gravitate to those and bring them home and then they'd go in certain places around the house and then I'd bury them

[79] Kōhatu are considered by Māori to have mauri (life force/essence) and spiritual properties that mean they can be utilised as a source of wellness and healing (McClintock 2003, 21).

> in some places as well. But never knew what that was all about and I carried that with me till about 13…

Conversely, Shane shared his slight disappointment when he did not experience a feeling or "stirring" when he visited his whānau *urupā* (burial ground/cemetary): "I mean I went up to Tokomaru Bay, I wanted to go and have a look, and a cousin took me round the urupā, and I was hoping to feel something, some moving kind of stirring of the bones or whatever, and I just didn't, it fell, not fell flat, but emotionally I didn't really…" However, Shane had had other experiences of a "feeling" associated with being in places where there was a whakapapa connection, prior to knowing his birth whānau: "…I remember when I was at St Stevens we stayed at that *marae*[80], and I can remember waking up in the morning just feeling this real peace, and I didn't know that this whare's named after one of my main *tūpuna* (ancestor/s)…" Shane's comments illustrate the intrinsic power attributed to biological connection, as a 'real' entity entailing or exerting forces that may be felt. For Shane and other participants, embodied experiences of their whakapapa were deeply comforting signs of connection, if only privately experienced.

He taonga

Five participants spoke specifically about the specialness of being Māori. To them, this constituted a taonga.

> …it must have been on an intermediate school form, it had something that you had to write down your ethnicity and my mum had put quarter Māori. And I remember looking at it and going 'oh', kind of surprised but not surprised, I must have known on some level but, and all I remember is I really liked seeing that written down about me. That it was something really special and something to kind of hold quite, that was precious to me and I always felt like that about being Māori.
>
> Yeah some people don't seem to have put any value on it…Which is so bizarre when it was just like the only thing I ever wanted. (Donna-Marie)

[80] Marae: complex of buildings around the marae, the open area in front of the wharenui, where formal greetings and discussions take place.

Mere also considered knowledge of the Māori world as a taonga. The message here is that those who have been brought up with this knowledge are lucky and enjoy a privilege that perhaps an adoptee does not have: "Yeah and the envy of the ones that have had that, lots of envy for them, and yeah I sit there and think 'fuck you're lucky, that you've had that and been privileged to that', and frustrated with ones that abuse it and don't take it for the taonga that it is..."

Kere shared the considerable significance of a physical taonga carved for him by a friend's father, owing to the implicit acknowledgement of him as Māori. Kere alludes to the preciousness of something that one barely has, compared to the value of something taken for granted; when something such as whakapapa is taken for granted, it is not appreciated in the same way, as perhaps it is in the case of Māori adoptees:

> [My friend's] dad made [a taonga] for him and one for me. And it's just held a special place in my heart. Interesting that my friend threw his, or lost his, it didn't mean nothing to him…Well his father's Māori, and he said to me that you never buy your own greenstone carving, you give them to somebody and that ties you. He never ever told me what it ties you to, but he just said it ties you and he said you wear it on your heart.

Linked to the specialness of being Māori, and of whakapapa, both Jenny and Rick referred to this as being something that *can't be taken away*. Adhering to a primordial perspective of whakapapa, the notion of whakapapa being inherited and *within* an individual gives it an inherent quality, which despite externalities such as skin colour, knowledge of reo, lack of social validation, cannot be disputed. In Jenny's case, she used this phrase in relation to her son: "My youngest [son], he's really passionate about Māori. He said 'this is part of my identity that nobody else can take away'." The use of this phrase by Jenny, Rick and Kere appears to overlook the notion of socially assigned ethnicity/identity, or perhaps privileges the primordial and inner knowing associated with whakapapa. However, it also speaks to their lived experience of having things *taken away*, and in contrast, whakapapa as promising something inalienable.

Being-brought-up-(by)-Pākehā

Being raised (by) Pākehā, as Pākehā, was a key aspect of the difference that characterised participants' experiences of being adopted. In a closed adoption context of not knowing whakapapa, both of these experiences marked participants as *being-different-from-other-Māori*, open to contestation.

Not knowing whakapapa

Although whakapapa was considered to be innate by participants, they were unable to validate this externally due to the severing of birth ties via closed adoption. For two participants, the information provided to their adoptive parents upon their adoption was unclear regarding their Māori ethnicity, and so for some time they did not know whether they had whakapapa Māori. In Lisa's case this meant that she was unable to identify as Māori, despite feeling drawn towards Māori groups and activities:

> Lots of people had asked me growing up, 'are you a Māori?' and my parents were 100% sure that I wasn't. It had never occurred to them that there might be political reasons why they had been told I wasn't. I guess possibly because of that I'd always been a little bit drawn to Māori stuff, like I did te reo at university, not for long, but, but it was something I was intent on pursuing. As I got older and I was involved in Māori groups, kind of feeling a bit like an imposter, but like I was very open, 'I don't even know whether I have Māori whakapapa, but I'll be involved'. So I guess I suspected but I kinda didn't want to be invested…

Each of the remaining participants were told that they had a Māori birth parent or parents, and so could cite this when needed. As many were to find, however, this was not sufficient to engage meaningfully within a world that asks for ancestral connections. Three participants referred to the lack of knowledge of whakapapa in metaphysical terms, as a black hole or abyss:

> [A *kuia* (female elder)] just said 'Rick, Rick, stop, stand up, tell me who you are', and I couldn't do it, and as I stood up, this black hole opened up behind me, and I just wanted to fall into it, it scared the piss out of me, and I just sat back down in tears, and she said 'you need to know, you need to go find out who you are', and that was my journey. (Rick)

> I described it in my 20s as being like you're standing on an abyss, on a black abyss and there's nothing behind you, you don't actually know who you are and it feels like you could easily fall into that abyss, into that blackness because what's there? And you have to make your way in the future on your own… (Jenny)

> An empty fucking hole in that wairua space, so empty. (Donna-Marie)

Both Donna-Marie and Jenny talk about the emptiness and nothingness created by not knowing their whakapapa, and for Jenny this felt like something she could disappear into or be consumed by, a state

of aloneness, and being without connection. Donna-Marie labels this space as 'wairua', talking about it as somewhere deep inside and deeply personal. For Donna-Marie the vulnerability and yearning produced by not knowing was intensely painful:

> …So by the time I got to about third form, so 12, 13, 14 up until when I met my birth father at the age of 21, was this…it's just the most incredible yearning, my whole relationship with te ao Māori was this yearning that was never going to be answered…it was just too much and too vulnerable and too painful and it's the space that you should feel so profoundly peaceful and it was at the level that I felt most profoundly empty or just a blank, like there's nothing when it should be that part that centres you and grounds you.

Paul also talked about not knowing his whakapapa as painful and debilitating, particularly in a bilingual school unit context:

> I felt at pains growing up not knowing why I just couldn't get the information and just let me deal with it, you know. It was an internal struggle constantly and an identity issue that I just thought 'why don't they just tell me?' [My adoptive father] probably in his naiveté and lack of Māori knowledge himself probably didn't realise that going into that world without knowing your whakapapa was the most scariest thing ever. So having someone say to you '*nō hea koe*, where are you from?' and not knowing, that's pretty frightening. And that probably took a toll on identity and that made me a little unhappy to be honest…I mean, it's quite a naked feeling, quite horrible…

While Paul was able to learn Māori concepts, *waiata* (songs) and tikanga and in many respects feel Māori, he felt unable to 'own' his Māori identity without knowledge of whakapapa. Paul's use of the term naked expresses the vulnerability of not knowing, of being exposed and lacking the protection or covering that whakapapa affords.

The language and metaphors that participants have used convey the intensity and depth of feeling associated with their lack of knowledge of whakapapa. Donna-Marie elaborates on her use of the term 'hole', as part of difficult and perhaps perilous terrain to be navigated: "…it's not a smooth field, there are holes and gaps in things here and there and there…adoption gives you particular holes and gaps…ours are particular ones and you have to learn how to navigate them."

Through asserting that adopted people have particular holes in their self-knowledge that can be navigated, rather than filled, through whakapapa, Donna-Marie suggests that complete knowledge may

not be attainable. In contrast to Rick's "satelliting" discussed earlier, Shane employs the metaphor of navigation to describe what whakapapa can do, imbuing it with an extra-terrestrial element that invokes a sense of being with connection to something of substance and scale, if not earthly: "[Whakapapa's] like coordinates, you know? I mean…it's almost like a starscape thing, and if you look at our tūpuna, they navigated off the stars, ok we're aligned with that and in a line with that, and you've got all these reference points, as an adoptee you've got nothing, you're just floating around out in the dark, you know?"

For Lisa the desire for knowledge of birth origins is "…kind of that search for something solid to stand on, and if you're not adopted you can kind of take that for granted, even if there is a contradiction." Here Lisa is acknowledging that although the solidity arising from being connected to biological kin may be illusory, it is still something that adopted people do not have the luxury of taking for granted, and it is something that she desires nonetheless.

Terms such as abyss, black hole and gap convey the nothingness that some participants felt without knowledge of whakapapa – an empty albeit potential-filled void (Te Kore). The experience of disconnection was articulated through references to floating, needing grounding and rooting (in the right place). Likened to a starless night, to be without whakapapa was akin to navigating blind. Thus, to know whānau and whakapapa is to connect, anchor and substantiate.

Kere is yet to find out the identity of his birth father, and therefore his whakapapa. His longing to know is enduring and complicates his participation in the Māori world.

> I can't say where I'm from in a Māori sense, so I don't know my *awa* (river), you know I don't know. So when you're doing a course you make them up and I've got I'm from the West Coast and I have got where I grew up, but it feels false…There's a real longing in me to be more in tune with my Māoridom.

Whakapapa is most commonly translated as "genealogy". However, the word itself is derived from *whakapaparanga* meaning a layer or series of layers (Ngata and Ngata 2019, 26), which is applied to the connections between all things, people, entities and constructs, providing a form of relational identity (Lythberg, McCarthy and Salmond 2019, 7). Participants recognised the fundamental importance of whakapapa in relation to being-Māori and anticipated a time that they would come to learn of their genealogical origins; their Māori identity counted on it.

Socialised as Pākehā

A key difference cited by 10 participants was that of their socialisation within a Pākehā family. On the whole, this meant that there was minimal Māori input and little or no exposure to Māori knowledge, perspectives, culture, or role models. This led to awkward or difficult encounters with the Māori world:

> …part of my difficulty is that yes I'm Māori but I've been brought up white. So I find that there's a juxtaposition there that's actually quite difficult to handle in a way because I can pronounce words really well but I'm not fluent at all. I don't belong to a marae so I'm not comfortable on marae but on the other hand people look to me as being 'oh you're Māori so you'd know all this stuff' but actually no…there's that assumption you know. Whereas actually I'm a white Māori. (Jenny)

> …because I wasn't raised in it, my first experience on a marae was when I was in my 30's, fucking hell that's really pitiful, but you know, if you're not confident in those spaces… (Mere)

In such encounters, some participants were "othered", openly challenged, judged as inauthentic, or bullied:

> I was really bullied by a Māori girl and she ended up being expelled actually…because I was too white a Māori. (Jenny)

> …too white to be accepted by other Māori…And in the 70s in Greymouth there was no Māori culture at all, but I had a friend...and his father did kapa haka and [my adoptive mother would] always push us to go to it and my brother, he just absolutely rejected it, and I'd go along, but I was that colour there (pointing to the white wall) and I didn't fit it in, they didn't want me. Yep. I was a bastard. So they didn't want a bastard there. (Kere)

Donna-Marie recounts an experience at university in which she felt humiliated for her lack of knowledge of te ao Māori as well as her adoptive position:

> So in this class, which was really cool and really interesting, there came a discussion about whāngai. We were talking about Māori institutions, and in my mind because adoption and whāngai were used interchangeably sometimes and not being aware just how different they are.

> Like one's a Māori thing and one's a Pākehā state thing. And then having a discussion and asking if there's anyone in the class who has been whāngai-ed. And me being brave enough for the first time to put my hand up and say 'yes I have been' and then being kind of told 'no, what you've had…', by [a prominent Māori professor], being completely othered and shut down and not right and not Māori and 'somebody else to answer instead'. And I can't remember the discussion that came after that because just feeling just absolutely humiliated and I can understand why, the whāngai we want to talk about in class is actually not what you have been through, but how to handle, unless you've been through that, you need to handle people who talk about adoption very carefully. You know he didn't say anything nasty but just to be kind of othered and silenced and it was more what I felt, inappropriate, fish out of water, like not Māori. You know, trying to step into this space, and… (Donna-Marie)

This was not an isolated occurrence, but one of several which culminated in some difficulty for Donna-Marie negotiating a position in te ao Māori as an adoptee. In such instances there was rarely any opportunity for recourse. In Shane's case, as a child, he felt unable to articulate or counter the marginalisation he experienced: "I grew up in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, which is quite a high Māori population, and I guess a lot of those kids looked at me and said 'oh he's Pākehā' and I felt like 'nah nah I'm not actually', you wanted to answer back and say 'no your assumptions are wrong'." In the setting of a Māori boys' secondary school, a context in which being Māori was the norm and celebrated, Shane found himself subject to a racist attack on the basis of his fair appearance and unknown whakapapa:

> …at [high school] there was this generalised pride, it was normal to be Māori…I got flack from guys, there were a couple of guys who were quite racist towards Pākehā…one of them, I was lying on a bunk and he just walked past and jumped up and bang, for no other reason than basically cos I looked pale, and again I wanted to answer back and say 'what'd you do that for you prick, I'm Māori, for all I know I could be related to you, why'd you do that?'…guys there who had cousins and brothers probably got it a little easier because their brother was such and such, 'you leave him alone', whereas I had none of that and so there was a sort of isolation really…

For those who were visibly Māori, their appearance brought expectations from others of certain understandings or competencies:

> ...well I look at it and go mm I was taken away and I never got any of the Māori input, my mother didn't give me any chance to be around, and Māori would say to me um 'oh you'll be able to speak Māori because it will be in you'. I thought 'actually I wasn't around it'…now I wasn't Māori you know? I didn't know how to be Māori because I'd been brought up as European so I had no idea. (Rick)

As Rick points out, sometimes the expectations were infeasible, and as he thought, overstating what is biologically determined. Not being able to fulfil others' expectations can provoke anxiety, and furthermore, dictate or determine social relationships and choices:

> Yeah, when someone said 'oh you know it's like the Māori way' and I'm like 'god I actually have absolutely no idea, yeah I really get overly anxious and have to chill out a bit cause I realise, it's just who I'm, it's okay I wasn't brought up with that. But when you're in a social setting and someone expects you to know what it is and you just don't and oh god. (Rachel)

> Yeah primary school was fine, but as you get into those other schools and there's different expectations cos you're Māori (laughter) and like we should be able to do this, and why can't you *haka* (dance or perform) and why can't you sing,…and how come you can't do this, and so there was a lot of that, and so sometimes it became easier not to be friends with Māori kids cos then I wouldn't have to explain and justify why I couldn't do this and do that…and with the Pākehās, most of them never saw me as Māori anyway because I had so many Pākehā ways… (Mere)

The majority of participants spoke of their Pākehā adoptive parents being supportive of them forging a connection with things Māori. "Absolutely, so my mother…knew I was part Māori and she wanted us to be immersed in the culture…We grew up totally Pākehā, very supportive parents but the fact is, we were white" (Kere). However, as several participants alluded to, engaging in Māori activities or sites in isolation or without knowledge of whakapapa, was also problematic:

> …it's been a real struggle when I was a child growing up because my parent and my stepfather were European and I was Māori. So, they were awesome, liberal, lovely…they were pushing me into Māori culture and Māori stuff and I didn't identify as Māori because I grew up in a white environment. (Emma)

> I went to [a Māori boys' school], I mean my parents always knew, they would try to accommodate the fact that I was Māori…and they sent me [there] as a way to try and address that need which they couldn't address. That actually ended up being a bit of a disaster because it was such a sort of violent place, and it actually exacerbated it because a lot of the guys I was in class with were…fluent and knew their whakapapa backwards and so it just highlighted what I didn't have. (Shane)

> I think that comes more from Dad, he really believed the importance of knowing your culture so he tried to, I mean, well with names and pushing us into our culture was his way of trying to give back to us because he knew that they couldn't. (Rua)

Rua's brother Paul confirmed their adoptive father's proactive and supportive approach, but reported experiencing some difficulty with it:

> By the time I'd got to secondary school Dad being the liberal minister thought it was a great idea putting me into a bilingual unit because in his world it would have been great, yes we can't provide that te reo and tikanga and he had an interest in it so worked for Te Taha Māori, the Māori division of the church. And so he thought by coming along to those hui and being part of a bilingual unit, it was going to be, not sufficient, but a step towards owning your identity…When I look back probably one of the biggest reasons I wanted to leave there is because being in a Māori environment was quite scary and actually I was ill-equipped, I just didn't have the tools to do what I needed to do.

Both Emma and Paul use the term "liberal" to refer to their Pākehā parents' progressive attitudes to things Māori. While they recognised that on the whole these attitudes were positive, they also highlight the problematic aspects; a potentially romantic and not well-informed outsider view that overlooked or could not appreciate their children's positioning and experiences.

For Rachel, the inevitable questioning that would arise from people knowing that she was brought up in a Pākehā family led her to hide this fact:

> I didn't want to have the whole connotations of you're Māori but you're not Māori, like all those questions and so I either kind of hid it and felt really uncomfortable and really ashamed because my family are really amazing and they never stopped me from doing anything, it wasn't really their fault that they didn't bring me up in that sense. You know back in those days

> you never really had that sense of bringing that culture in and they honestly did the best that they could and I don't have any worries about that, it's just the way it was. And my mum and dad they both look back on it now and they do really regret that they couldn't bring that culture in but at the end of the day they gave me a really safe and real loving environment.

As well as feeling ashamed about her lack of ease with things Māori and the subsequent questioning of her Māoriness, Rachel also felt ashamed of the doubt that it cast on her loving adoptive parents. Māori themselves struggled to connect with participants who were unable to specify their ethnicity or iwi affiliations. Kere has had this experience several times when engaging with Māori learning institutions. He finds himself anticipating an abrupt end to *whakawhanaungatanga* (relationship-building, bonding or connection) as a result:

> Yeah the interest is lost, which is really sad. When I did the Māori course through polytech …if you don't know your whakapapa they're really not interested any further. I did say to one woman, 'I see you've lost interest in this conversation' and she says 'what do you mean?' I said 'I don't know my whakapapa so all of a sudden I'm not important to you'. And she was the tutor. I said 'what's with that? Is it because I'm white?' I like [con]fronting people because I'm white and…my angle the whole time is that well actually I'm part of this lost tribe and you want me to recognise you, but you don't recognise me.

Kere's account reinforces the bi-directionality and relationality of social identity, and that Māori identity is contingent on being identified as Māori by others. This is something that Lisa also encountered. Lisa became used to "constant questioning" of her ethnicity, and while she did not know whether she had whakapapa Māori, she was careful not to step into that space illegitimately: "I feel like there was constant questioning of my ethnicity, and it wasn't a huge deal, but it was only a problem for me in negotiating my place in Māori groups really…it was just constant questioning. I just kind of turned it into a joke cos it seemed so ridiculous.…and I didn't even want to take that space kind of fraudulently, and that became increasingly a problem as I became increasingly drawn to it I guess."

Some participants used the word whakamā[81] to describe their deep shame or embarrassment at not possessing the requisite knowledge or skills to be 'authentically' Māori that they ought to. Shane

[81] Whakamā literally means to become pale or white, the external physical change resulting from emotions of shame and embarrassment due to sense of powerlessness and diminished status. From a Māori perspective, this affects the mauri of a person (Smith, Tinirau and Smith 2019, 27-8)

felt that the lack of knowledge of whakapapa potentially rendered proficiency in te reo Māori pointless, leaving the speaker without a place to stand or speak from. Here Shane is alluding to the concept of tūrangawaewae, literally the place to stand that whakapapa enables: "I mean I would have loved to speak Māori, but I always felt inadequate, especially when I was in [high school] and so there's that whakamā kicks in and you don't have any place to stand for a start…"
Mere uses whakamā in the same way, to describe her feelings about her lack of kapa haka proficiency, while also noting that her athletic capabilities *were* attributed to being Māori – thus she measured up in some ways but not others:

> …I was very good at running and sports and that, but they always thought 'well that's because you are Māori', not because it was Mere…and then with haka and that in high school…just that 'the Māoris all know how to do it, so why don't you?' so yeah real whakamā about it, not knowing…and then get angry you know, and whether that was reactive or just trying to get myself out of the situation I was in or whatever…and I spose when you're a kid, you're trying to blend in as much as you can as opposed to being out there a bit.

Participants recognised that they were not alone in their experience of disconnection from the Māori world. However, it was suggested by several participants, that as well as not learning what it means to be Māori, their socialisation purely in the Pākehā world as the 'as if biological' children of Pākehā parents, meant that their assimilation into that world was also different.

> And you know, I get the…'we're all colonised, not just you' and I said 'but you're colonised but I lived in the [coloniser's] house', my parents aren't colonisers but you know we were predominantly adopted to Pākehā family to assimilate so I've taken on a lot of their characteristics. (Rua)

> Even though they are brought up with Māori they can also feel that kind of sense of disconnect as well, yeah but being legally adopted into a white family I think that is another, quite a big hurdle really because there's so much unknowingness whereas if you have Māori parents or you've been brought up by aunty and uncle there is a connectedness there that you could tap into very easily if you wanted to. Whereas for us, you've got to break the ground. Or maybe it's psychological. (Jenny)

It is interesting to note Jenny's self-questioning in the last part of her quote; asserting the qualitative difference of being-adopted-and-Māori compared to other disconnected or assimilated Māori on the one hand, but then questioning whether this is an actuality or an adoptee-manufactured artefact on the other. Rudy (2019, 206) argues that such qualms are symptomatic of the "neurotic subjectivity" produced by the denials and discourses of closed adoption.

Participants (Lisa, Rachel, Paul, Natasha, Donna-Marie, Shane, Daniel) largely grew up not knowing other Māori adoptees, so opportunities to share or discuss this unique experience were rare. However, as the above quotes illustrate, participants supposed that their situation was perhaps a 'special case' of hybridity – even though *all* Māori are hybrids who have been subject to colonisation (Webber 2007, 39), there was nonetheless something different about being a Māori adoptee.

Awareness of the 'inauthenticity' of their Pākehā adoptive upbringing, but without the knowledge or means to address that, left some participants feeling an acute sense of liminality: "When I started to work with Māori in Nelson, I wasn't Māori enough cos I wasn't brought up Māori and I wasn't white so I couldn't go down that track. And because I didn't know who I was I still had no place to stand." (Rick)

For Shane, the available narratives and social groupings were limited and polarised along racial lines – and he did not fit in either. Furthermore, a mixed race position was also inaccessible to him at that point in time:

> …I didn't know which side of the fence I was supposed to be on, I grew up in the 70s and 80s and things were starting to heat up with Treaty settlements and protests and the Springbok tour, that left quite an impact on me, and especially looking at…the way the media portrayed it, it was always this polarised kind of narrative, and you had these extremes that got all the attention, and I'm like 'where do I fit in all that? Am I supposed to take sides here?' So there's that part of it, of being of mixed race, you want to claim it but then you couldn't, it was just out of your grasp."
>
> …w*here do I fit?* And I ended up going and hanging out with all the guys I'd been through primary school with, they were all Pākehā, they were quite racist some of the time, and so you're getting all these guys 'oh look at those niggers', and you wanna speak out and say 'oi', but then I can't go and join those niggers cos they think I'm a Pākehā, so again, I didn't know where I fitted…" [emphasis added].

Similarly, Mere felt "too white to be Māori, too Māori to be white", identifying her state of being as something else: "…I've always said there's lots of shades of grey with me because I am a shade of grey." Mere expressed her racial in-betweeness through mixed monochromatic metaphors; referencing the contrast of a black-white dualism, Mere claims a colour halfway, imbuing her being-adopted-and-Māori with additional meanings of ambiguity and uncertainty.

'True artefacts'[82]

Most participants were told that they were Māori, but this was communicated to them by non-Māori, in the racialised terms or discourse of the time (e.g. blood quantum, the physical characteristics of their parents). There was a marked absence of Māori people in the participants' early lives, to look to or develop a sense of being Māori *in Māori terms*. Māori adopted siblings, or Māori children at school were often the only point of reference for participants – *am I browner or whiter than them?* As they began to operate more independently in the world, participants were exposed to and became aware of the attitudes of others towards them, often based on their looks. Participants were made well aware that, either by virtue of their skin colour, or their lack of knowledge and contact with te ao Māori, they were not sufficiently Māori. Attitudes of Māori and Pākehā were distinguished as being different and also meaning something different to participants. Being recognised as Māori by other Māori was more important to a number of participants, and for some, their fair or white appearance betrayed how they felt about being Māori.

In terms of how participants spoke about their experiences of being-Māori-and-adopted, a significant distinction emerged between their self-knowledge and personal identity, and that of being able to perform a Māori social (and cultural) identity. What being-Māori means to them personally is encapsulated in a 'primordial' sub-theme, which reflects the ways that they have been constructed racially via adoption entrance narratives (blood and looks), and the wider context in which they have been socialised. However, there are also two important counter-narratives – that of the specialness of being-Māori (he taonga), and its innate, extant quality independent of knowledge. These counter-narratives assert being-Māori as *felt* within the body, existing irrespective of verification, and significant despite its dismissal by others (e.g. through colour-evasiveness or contestation).

'Primordial' consists of participants' earliest experiences and memories of being Māori – existing at or from the beginning of [their] time, talked about as intuitive, involuntary, inborn, innate,

[82] The oxymoronic title for this section, which summarises the Being-primordially-Māori theme, employs a play on words using the term artefact, an artificial product or effect in place of artifact, an object or product of archaeological or historical interest, and therefore with a primordial quality. The term 'true artefact' potentially describes the position of Māori adoptees, as simultaneously 'true' or authentically Māori and 'artificial' or inauthentic in other respects.

inherent, inherited and ingrained, fixed in blood and looks but also felt, and of a special and precious quality. The negative implications of primordialism are discussed extensively in anthropological and other literature (Eller and Coughlan 1993, 183), however primordial concepts abound in media and public discourse (Schraml 2012, 82; Gil-White 1999, 790). The reason for this is the considerable significance attached to primordial attachments, elements which have "a distinctive power" because of their incidence in our lives at a very early stage, without our choice. Examples include blood ties and looks, a person's name, nationality or other group affiliation, the first language one learns to speak, and the religion and culture one is born into. Cornell and Hartmann (1998, 48) note that the identity created by these elements is "incomparably resilient and enduring" because such ties are "deeply embedded in the human psyche and in human relationships".

While primordial attachments include all of those "endowments and identifications" that an individual is born with, by virtue of his/her parents and their affiliations (Isaacs 1975, 30-1; Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 48), adoptees are restricted in what they can know or claim in this regard. Thus, participants' heavy emphasis on those things inside themselves that are at the core of their Māori being, appeared to relate more to primordial attachments and the power of those primordial ties, and rather less to ethnic or cultural primordialism – the idea that culture and ethnicity is fixed, fundamental and rooted in the unchangeable circumstances of birth (Cornell and Hartmann 1998, 48). This makes sense, given that adoptees have been 'uprooted' from their birth circumstances, and 're-rooted' in altogether different adoptive circumstances, with profound effects on ethnic identification (see "Socialised as Pākehā" sub-theme).

Several participants felt a 'pull' towards things Māori – this was a very 'real' feeling, that they invoked primordial ties to justify. The primordialising work is done by and through 'whakapapa' (genealogy; layering; becoming earth): "in the term 'whakapapa', we see the continuous activity of primordial Being, 'Papa', by which all things, originating in her, immediately carry with them the suggestion of all other things" (Mika 2016, 7). As participants are the embodiment of their whakapapa, this means that their whakapapa is within them and a part of them, irrespective of their knowledge or upbringing. Some participants did not want to talk about their Māori-ness in racial or even ethnic terms (Rick, Sonya), whilst talking in terms of an inalienable whakapapa connection – thus rejecting some while embracing other primordial elements.

Blood and its meanings

Two meanings of the term "blood" are apparent in participants' talk. Firstly, blood as a symbol for shared biogenetic substance and kinship, and the associated assumption that "blood is thicker than

water" (Schneider 1980, 49). Biological or blood connection is spoken of as a "real", deeper and fuller form of kinship and belonging that participants yearn for. Biological relations are claimed as "my blood", and "blood [running] through there" is used to describe connection with ancestral land, evoking images of river and entwinement with the landscape. Talking in terms of blood invokes common Western European understandings of not only a natural order, but also permanence and fixity (Schnider 1980, 1968). Blood confers an unchanging identity, is the source of consanguinity, substance of kin connection derived from nature and "the location of unalienated attachment" (Sabean and Teuscher 2013, 15). "Māori blood" invokes whakapapa, which connects one to land, and to the primordial Being, Papatūānuku [Mother Earth] (Mika 2016, 7). Hence, the substantiation and naturalisation functions of "blood ties" as well as the ties themselves, may be particularly appealing to adoptees. Indeed, Carsten (2013, 11) notes the use of "idioms of blood" to articulate the antithesis – disconnection and erasure – in European and US adoption studies.

Secondly, the association between 'blood' and 'race' (Cannell 2013, 89; Sabean and Teuscher 2013, 12) featured in participant interviews. References to blood quantum, primitivism and colour-blindness speak to residual notions of racial purity and authenticity, racial distinctions and hierarchy (Bell 2004, 46-7). The actions and effects of settler colonialism are also evident – racialisation, miscegenation and assimilation (Wolfe 2006, 387-409) culminating in categorisations of "half-caste" and calculations of fractions or "degrees of Māori blood." However, in contrast to the state's enumeration of half-castes in the 20th century as a gauge of "biological absorption", assimilation and the eventual erasure of Māori (Kukutai 2011, 37), participants' articulation of their Māoriness in these terms asserts their presence instead of disappearance.

Authenticity

Participants simultaneously experienced a being-Māori that is heavily contested – being-adopted-and-Māori as inauthentic and inadequate. Participants became aware early on, often at school, that their socialisation in a Pākehā adoptive family had resulted in a 'deficit' that left them unknowing, awkward and uncomfortable in encounters with Māori people and the Māori world (see Being-different, Being-brought-up-(by)-Pākehā sub-themes). Looking Māori contributed to that marginalisation, through requiring some explanation or account for the discrepancy between appearance and cultural 'competence'. A number of participants were encouraged by their adoptive parents to be involved in Māori activities or groups, but they often felt ill-equipped and vulnerable in those spaces. The involvement in itself felt inauthentic and tokenistic in the sense of being awkwardly 'tacked on' to

(rather than integrated within) their Pākehā home lives, and something that they couldn't share with their adoptive parents.

Participants learned to compare themselves to a 'traditional' Māori yardstick, in which a socially assigned Māori identity is contingent on verifiable whakapapa Māori, visible physical indicators, specific cultural competencies, knowledge or skills as well as lived experiences, and acceptance by others. This collection of markers illustrates a persistence of earlier racial thinking combined with a "new culturalism"; the colonial logic of dividing colonised others into distinct races reproduced in terms of culture (Sissons 2005, 37). Ethnic and indigenous people are expected to be "visibly other" – phenotypically different in terms of hair, skin colour and facial features as signposts of racial belonging, which are expected to align with cultural signposts such as speech, dress and manner. Where there is a contradiction between these dimensions of visible identity, their ethnic or indigenous authenticity is "thrown into question" (Sissons 2005, 42-3). Each of the participants in this study gauged their own visible Māoriness, and their appearance was also subject to the judgements and actions of others. Where those who were not racially identifiable as Māori (or were perhaps 'ambiguous') were much less likely to be accepted as Māori in social and 'cultural' settings on that basis alone, those who were visibly Māori were nonetheless deemed wanting due to their lack of 'cultural' proficiency.

Knowledge of the Māori world, and proficiency in tikanga and te reo Māori are among those cultural indicators that adoptees inevitably failed to meet. Derby and Macfarlane (2018, 221) have suggested that "RQ" or "reo quantum" (skill in te reo Māori) has effectively replaced blood quantum as "the one true marker of a person's identity", a measurement that is enthusiastically administered by many Māori. Even more damning for the Māori adoptee's social identity is that of not knowing whakapapa. Although whakapapa is ultimately inclusive, "building a connection between all who share a common ancestor" (Bell 1999, 126), this level of connection is really only possible where that whakapapa is known. Where adoptees lack that knowledge, they are unable to 'prove' their Māori ancestry to others.

This is not a position unique to Māori adoptees; many other Māori find recovering their whakapapa difficult or impossible where their families are several generations disconnected from their ancestral roots, or those with the knowledge have either died or refuse to disclose it (Stewart-Harawira 1993, 33). However, despite colonisation being the common factor in "partialisation" of Māori identity, participants felt that this frequently went unacknowledged in their case – they were instead blamed somewhat for their lack of 'purity'. In contrast to Sisson's discussion of these identity markers as introduced and imposed by the coloniser, Derby and Macfarlane (2018) and the experiences of many participants highlight that these markers and the underpinning colonial logics are being employed and

reproduced by Māori themselves. While the construction of the traditional indigene may be part of aspirational and decolonial "reclaiming" and a form of strategic essentialism, this configuration of racial and cultural essentialism effectively operates as a mechanism of Māori adoptee exclusion.

The need to validate whakapapa affiliations is a form of "descent-based essentialism" (Bell 2004, 148-9), part of the strategic essentialism or assertion of indigenous cultural authenticity required to maintain autonomy and integrity in the context of a colonising state. Descent is the minimum requirement for Māori identity claims, and "beyond that, 'tradition', both pre-contact and colonial in origin, is a crucial source for forms of expression of that identity…" (Bell 2004, 150). Strategic essentialism as embraced by some Māori then, has involved both resistance to colonialism and the assertion of an autonomous indigenous difference. This difference may present as an idealised essence, however its strategic declaration has been deemed necessary for the endurance of Māori as a distinct people (given historical and ongoing assimilatory pressures: Bell 2004, 137, 143).

The motivations for strategic essentialism also underlie Māori suspicions of hybridity. Given the (colonial) connotations of racial and cultural impurity/inauthenticity, identification as "singularly Māori" is deemed preferable as an act of resistance (Bell 2004, 79). To not do so, for instance, to identify as Pākehā while claiming Māori descent, represents the success of assimilation and betrays the indigenous cultural authenticity project. Where Māori adoptees feel unable to meet the demands of what they experience as an oppressive authenticity (Sissons 2005, 37[83]), and yet inauthentic or treacherous through their genuine claim of hybridity (how can they be anything but, as "as if biological" children of Pākehā?), where does that leave them? Strategic essentialism becomes a form of Māori-imposed oppressive authenticity for Māori adoptees.

Māori adoptees are both racial and cultural hybrids, reflected in the primordial/contested sub-themes, and consistent with patterns of identity formation described in American transracial adoption literature. Samuels (2010, 31) found that "claiming whiteness culturally but not racially" was the position often taken by Black transracial adoptees who had been brought up by white parents in a predominantly white social context, but in which they were treated as racially Black. Limited acceptance as Black by Black peers, owing to their transracial adoptive upbringing, compelled many to pursue "biological pathways to an 'authentic' Black kinship"; in other words, to search for their biological family (Samuels 2010, 35). This is where many of the participants in this research study 'landed' at the conclusion of their adoptive family childhoods – the search for biological kin the only

[83] Oppressive authenticity is a mechanism of exclusion, whereby people who cannot fit in one of two categories "do not properly belong", are deemed impure, inauthentic and "too often become an excluded middle" (Sissons 2005, 39). Māori adoptees are positioned as a type of "excluded middle".

legitimate way out of their seemingly impossible subject position. Participants' experiences of this part of their adoption trajectory will be explored in the next chapter.

Loss, difference, emotion and identity

Loss is not a singular experience for the adoptee, but rather recurs throughout an adoptee's life (Silverstein and Kaplan 1982, 47). The original loss through relinquishment, in which the connection to birth family and birth parent attachment is severed, is superseded by adoption, in which a number of "innumerable secondary sub-losses" are experienced (Silverstein and Kaplan 1982, 47). Participants noted a loss of self, in Daniel's case of dutiful or charitable adoption, a loss of love, and loss of connection – biological and cultural. That these are also characteristics of adoptive difference means that those various forms of difference, through their association with different types of loss, are also *felt* or experienced differently.

This association of loss and difference with emotion and significance may be potentially explained using Archer's (2000) critical/social realist account of the stratified and emergent subject, in interaction with distinct orders of reality – natural, practical and discursive. According to Archer, each order entails particular concerns – respectively, physical wellbeing or satisfaction of basic needs, achievement and competence, and self-worth in the context of societal norms (Archer 2017, 191). As "commentaries on our concerns", emotions emerge from the subject's engagement in each order, reflective of the subject's internal conversation and self-evaluations. Different clusters of emotions may be identifiable according to order. Shame, for example, is an intrinsically social emotion, elicited "in conversation with" society and on the basis of judgements of "approbation or disapproval", whereas anxiety and sadness may be generated more or less directly by environmental threats or losses (Greenwood 1994, 155; Archer 2000, 215).

Simultaneously, the subject develops in distinct stages – from a continuous sense of self early in life, to personhood/personal identity and upon maturity, social selves (agent, actor) and social identities (Archer 2000, 257). The continuous sense of self anchors the person, agent and actor, and unites "life experiences, reflective evaluations, structural conditionings and normative expectations in one human being" (Archer 2000, 257). Personal identity emerges out of this sense of self, and is responsible for regulating the subject's relations with reality as a whole (Archer 2000, 87, 258). Social selves (agents, actors) contingent on personhood thereafter emerge at the interface of structure and agency. While we are each (primary) agents of the socio-cultural system into which we are born (according to culture, socio-economic, demographic features), corporate agency extends to the capacity to contribute to collective action and attempt to bring about social transformation. Lastly, an

individual may become an actor in possession of social identity, acquiring, accepting and personifying particular social roles, acting in particular social group interests.

It may be the case that, given the fundamental significance of universal or continuous self and personal identity, losses that threaten these aspects of the subject arouse greater concern or emotion. In contrast, losses that impact on social selves and identities may generate significant emotion such as shame, but without shaking the fundamental foundations of self or person. For example, participants' narratives in the primordial sub-theme entail a depth of feeling and personal significance; participants' expression of the personal losses of not knowing whakapapa are emotion- and metaphor-laden, giving the sense of a significant bearing on self and the achievement of Māori personhood. In comparison, while participants experienced shame or whakamā from the performative and social implications of their being adopted-and-Māori (i.e. not meeting Māori social identity 'competencies' in terms of language and cultural knowledge), these losses were differences that did not appear quite so damning.

Archer's concept of "ultimate concerns" are also of potential relevance here. In addition to the concerns attributed to each order of reality, Archer (2000, 4) proposed that subjects' internal conversations are guided by goals, values, and commitments meaningful to them, that constitute who they are and express their identities. These ultimate concerns relate to subjects' positioning within broader "fields" of structural relationships (Farrugia and Woodman 2015, 634). The pursuit of 'realness' and the alleviation of 'difference' are fundamental preoccupations of the adoptee (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 82-3; Herman 2008, 84, 211-2, 246; Modell 1994, 8, 116, 130) arising from their structural positioning against dominant conceptions of (and being without) biological kinship and identity. These preoccupations go hand in hand, but are not equivalent; all experienced losses are produced by and characterise adoptive difference, but not all losses correspond with 'realness' in the same way. Substance appears to be the differentiating factor. 'Realness' matters at the levels of self and personal identity, and also in terms of social identity (as authenticity). However, the 'realness' lost and sought at the level of self and personhood is that of biological connection, tangible and material; for example, being birthed by another human being, sharing the same bio-genealogy, and having 'roots' in the *whenua* (land, ground). These distinctions go some way towards explaining the opposing ways in which "being-Māori" is experienced, simultaneously and in tension – as embodied and primordial self and personhood, compared with a contested social identity, and the concerns and emotions accorded to each mode (see Table 5 below).

Table 5: Critical/social realist account of Māori adoptee experiences of loss, emotion and identity

Order of reality	**Loss**	**Significance/emergent human properties**	**Emotions**	**Ultimate concern/s**
Natural order	Loss of parental love	• Self-awareness • Satisfaction of needs	Anxiety Sadness Grief ↕ Shame	
Natural order + discursive	Loss of self as biologically connected entity	• Resemblance • Self-knowledge • Personal identity		Realness Difference
Natural/ discursive orders	Loss of whakapapa	• Personhood in te ao Māori • Personal identity • Social self – agent		Realness Difference
Practical/ discursive orders	Loss of socialisation within the Māori world	• Social identity – self-worth and societal normativity • Social self –actor; performance/mastery of subject/object relations		Difference Authenticity

It should be noted that not all participants agree with a framing of adoption in terms of loss. Paul contested this framing in his discussion of his own response to adoption, compared with that of his adopted sister Rua: "…I think we are dealing, we dealt and are dealing with it differently, like she's on in my view a much more *tūturu* (real, true, authentic, original) Māori you know 100% committed journey trying to almost recover and claim some lost ground as it's much more accepted that that background is lost." Here, Paul is critical of perceived adoption loss, and what it generates – particular courses of 'remedial' action and aspirations for a 're-discoverable' identity. In this way, Paul provides an account of both his limited interest in his own origin story, and his ambivalence regarding Māori social identity (see next chapter). However, after questioning the notion of loss, Paul does somewhat seek to bring about some redemptive resolution by stating that "from here on in" he will be open to whatever else comes forth as part of his ongoing reunion/reconnection experience.

This example illustrates the heterogeneity of adoptive subjectivities and positionality, as well as the implications for identity and the adoption trajectory. Although a clear and coherent Māori adoptee experience reminiscent of other indigenous transracial adoptee accounts has emerged, what this means and how it is acted upon can vary significantly nonetheless. This diversity and richness is explored in the next chapter, as participants 'pursue their bio-genealogical origins.

Te Pō.
The darkness at last a presence, there is no longer an empty void.
There is the night that stretches on.

Te Pō.
And in the darkness, the hum grows stronger. It is the hum of many voices, of infinite voices. It is all that has been, that will be, finding its form. Finding its will to be. Particles combine and divide, the ripples of their coupling and divorce spread out and become great waves. Everything has changed.

Te Pō.
The darkness envelops. It invades. It is you and us and we are darkness.

Te Pō.
The darkness is complete, oppressive. It defines and shapes our form.
It pushes down, and we push back.

Te Pō.
The darkness is our comfort, yet we continue to repulse it. The darkness that had defined our forms has been replaced with space.

Te Pō.
The darkness is now an absence of light. We have perceived this. Our eyes have opened.

Te Pō.
And in the darkness, we listen for the hum. It is both within us and without us.

Te Pō.
The darkness is a womb, it has nurtured us but we cannot stay within its confines forever.

Te Pō.
And in the darkness, we realise that we are not alone. We are many who dwell in the darkness of…

Te Pō.
The darkness, O the darkness that has nurtured us, that has oppressed us and defined us. The darkness that is us, must inevitably arc into light.

Whiti Hereaka (2019, 22-23)

Chapter Nine:
From Being to Becoming: Experiences of Being Adopted and Māori in the Bio-Genealogical Context

This chapter explores participants' experiences from early adulthood and beyond, through periods of searching for, meeting and establishing relationships with birth family. The term bio-genealogical refers to the *biological genealogy* that participants learn about, including but also extending beyond their biological parents and immediate family members. In this period, participants are 'shoring up' their personal identity, forging social identities, and determining what bearing their adoptive difference has on these projects of self. This is a time of agency, but also some ambivalence. Divergent adoptive trajectories make for diverse routes to roots; beyond their *being*-adopted-and-Māori, participants are *becoming*[84] something or someone else of their own creation. At this point participants are integrating their biological and social worlds, a significant and additional task (Passmore and Feeney 2009, 101)

These narratives as they relate directly to being-adopted-and-Māori will be discussed in three sections. Firstly, participants' motivations to search for birth family are explored, in relation to both dominant narratives and their adoption experiences. Secondly, the first encounter and subsequent contact with birth family members is analysed, with particular attention to the effects of loss on developing relationships, and participants' experiences of being within a whānau context. Finally, two primary outcomes of contact and reunion with birth family are detailed – those of constructing a whole origin story and learning about whakapapa. These outcomes were the most significant in terms of yielding self-understanding, supporting participants to make sense of being-adopted-and-Māori and to identify as Māori.

Searching for birth family

The end of the previous chapter alluded to the inevitability of participants searching for their birth families, in order to resolve or address some of the losses and differences at the core of their experience of adoption. And while each of the participants made contact with birth family members in some form,

[84] My use of the terms being and becoming here are suggesting an artificially clear distinction, however being and becoming are always in relation – being constituted by its process of becoming, and becoming dependent upon being (Capps 1965, 577).

the pathways taken to that point were not uniform. For all participants, searching for a parent or parents occurred in the period following the passing of the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985, which took effect 1 September 1986 (Aburn 2014, 80). It was at this point that adopted people aged 20 and over were able to apply to the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths and Marriages for their original or pre-adoptive birth certificate.

Reasons and motivations for searching

Dominant adoption reunion narratives

Granting access to birth records saw an increased emphasis on the importance of reunion in adoption research, as well as wider society. A dominant adoption reunion narrative emerged, based on the adoptee growing up feeling different, incomplete or marked by a lack of biological self-knowledge. This induces them to seek information or contact with birth families, thereby filling the gap or alleviating any adoptive difference, discovering a 'true' self and achieving integration and resolution in the process (Patton-Imani 2018, p. 9 of 19; Andersen 1989, 626). However, only a third of participants in this research (Shane, Rachel, Jenny, Lisa, Donna-Marie, Kere) stated that their search was motivated by what they felt was missing as a result of being adopted (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Reasons for searching compared to challenges growing up without birth family

Participant	Age at initiation of search	Difficulties arising from disconnection from birth family	Reasons for searching
Shane	16 (1971)	Not knowing self, whakapapa Not knowing why relinquished Lack of te reo Māori Trouble with identity	Wanting to know why Whakapapa, family history
Rachel	16 (1974)	Lack of te reo/tikanga Māori Not knowing self, whakapapa Not knowing why relinquished	Need to know self Wanting to know about birth mother, more than the 'black and white'
Paul	20 (1972)	Not knowing identity, whakapapa	
Lisa	20 (1973)	Not knowing self, whakapapa, ethnicity Not having shared biology	Need to know self Emotional need for belonging How fit in as Māori Knowledge for children
Donna-Marie	21 (1969)	Not knowing whakapapa – 'hole'	Birth father, whakapapa, spiritual/cultural connection Knowledge of te ao Māori Wanting to know why relinquished

Participant	Age at initiation of search	Difficulties arising from disconnection from birth family	Reasons for searching
Natasha	21 (1969)	Verifying whakapapa or ethnicity Not having shared biology	No desire to look Some curiosity
Kere	21 (1971)	Not knowing birth father Not knowing whakapapa	Whakapapa
Sonya	21 (1972)	Not knowing whakapapa	Claiming agency in own life
Rua	21 (1975)	Not knowing self, identity Not having shared biology	
Emma	25 (1976)	Not knowing mother's experience of pregnancy and birth Needing to know she was wanted	
Jenny	26+ (1960)	Not knowing medical history Not knowing whakapapa – 'abyss' Identity/intergenerational knowledge Not being able to answer questions	Wanting to know parents and siblings Wanting to know whakapapa
Rick	27 (1964)	Not knowing about the real me Not knowing whakapapa – 'black hole'	Whakapapa knowledge for children via self Connection to functional whānau and parents
Mere	36 (1963)	Te reo, tikanga Māori	Medical history only
Dean	36 (1964)	Not knowing about adoption Not knowing father	Whakapapa knowledge for children
Daniel	52 (1966)	Not knowing whakapapa Māori Not knowing self	Emotional drive to find mother Knowledge of tūpuna Knowledge of self

These participants searched for their birth families as soon as they were able (either post 20 years, or earlier with the help of social workers). In particular, Shane and Rachel's narratives exemplify the dominant adoption reunion narrative (the first part at least), and their coherence and consistency in this regard. Adherence to the dominant reunion narrative was further reinforced by opinions about "non-searchers." Shane, Jenny and Kere surmised that adoptees who do not search are less secure, more

likely to minimise or deny their adoptive difference, and will therefore find the prospect of searching for birth family threatening or destabilising.

> I mean each to their own, but I almost feel that people who don't go there, there's some innate fear, and I wouldn't say that out loud, I wouldn't put that on them cos it's trying to box them in, but…I don't think they necessarily understand that themselves. (Shane)

> So when I went through all my stuff [my adoptive mother] then got all the information for all the other kids as well but as far as I know none of them have done anything with it. None of them want to…They just don't want to know. I've got one brother who, I think he's actually in denial about who he is. (Jenny)

The remaining participants' accounts trouble the dominant narrative of 'lack' necessitating reunion. Natasha, Sonya and Mere did not frame their adoption experience in terms of need or lack. They felt their needs were met in their adoptive families, and were not looking to information or contact with birth family to fill any such need. For example, in the following quote, Natasha's need for fit and physical mirroring was met in her adoptive family, meaning she had no desire to search: "…I had no desire to look, I was quite happy with my family, my dad happened to be Māori so there wasn't any sort of 'you don't look like you don't belong there' or anything like that…I didn't feel any disconnection or sense of non-belonging, or yearning for anything else…around whakapapa or anything like that because I had whakapapa, it was what was given to me through my adoption". Natasha searched out of curiosity and opportunity rather than a deeper need; she was introduced by acquaintances to an adoption search specialist.

Emma also resisted the dominant narrative by refusing to internalise her adoptive difference as a personal deficit, constructing this instead as reflective of society's marginalisation of different others. Paul and Rua did not articulate any need for search and reunion, perhaps because their adoptive father had pre-empted this by searching for them. Indicating some reticence or ambivalence about searching, Paul questioned the value of seeking to answer any 'what if?' question. Paul has never asked why he was adopted, instead developing his own speculative narrative about the circumstances and reasons for his relinquishment (see Outcomes of Contact and Reunion section, 177).

Ethic of self-discovery versus ethic of reciprocity

Participants disclosed a range of purposes for searching. In many respects, the 'dominant search narratives' articulated by some participants reflected an *ethic of self-discovery*: a discourse of

individuality and identity that upholds an individual's moral right to embark upon such a quest (Wegar 1992, 98-99). Identity-related motives were most prevalent, with most participants seeking genealogical (whakapapa) and/or factual or biographical information. These motives corresponded with what participants reported they lacked in their adoptive upbringing, and the desire for self-understanding. Rachel framed her search for birth family according to this ethic, and as a fundamental search for self and personal direction: "When I was 16 and just trying to figure out who I was and what I was doing with my life and why I was the way I was and everything." A number of participants with this focus (Shane, Rachel, Lisa, Jenny) also sought to address deeper personal questions in order to come to terms with their adoption, such as why they were adopted, involving a more intensive and therapeutic level of engagement (search as therapy: Andersen 1989, 625). Shane for example, spoke of a need to ascertain the "bedrock of the truth" to address his "yearning and nagging to know." His way of doing that was to compile a comprehensive narrative of his origins.

The personal investment in accessing this information varied among participants. Some reported searching for the benefit of their families rather than themselves. Rick wanted his children to have the benefit of knowledge and whakapapa, while Dean wanted his children to have knowledge of whakapapa and a relationship with his whānau. The information Mere desired *was* to meet her own needs, however this was related to medical history and facts. Andersen (1988, 17) suggests that adoptees can feel compelled to justify birth family search in terms of the health and wellbeing of their children or medical history because they are "the least offensive politically", compared to an "ungrateful" personal interest in birth relatives or genealogy. It can also be assumed that participants did not necessarily disclose the details of what is a very personal and "intimate" process (March 1995, 74) in the interviews. Perhaps they cited reasons that prompted the search rather than any 'deeper' emotional motives. Alternatively, these responses might reflect an actual lack of need (perhaps as a result of a positive experience of adoption, or other means of emotional fulfilment), or a murkier recollection of search details given the time that had elapsed since (over 30 years for some participants).

Participants were acutely aware that they did not conform to bionormative social expectations and cultural norms, which did cause some discomfort (social interactionist model of searching: Müller and Perry 2001a, 15-16). There was a general sense of adoptees wanting something that non-adopted people can take for granted, reflecting a perception of knowing birth origins as an important part of 'normal' personal development, identity formation and establishing biographical continuity (Müller and Perry 2001a, 15-16). Participants did not perceive their quest for origins as unusual or atypical, but rather yielding what they have a right to know (Modell 1994, 139). This was felt most deeply by those who have been denied their Māori birth fathers' identity and details (Jenny and Kere). It is

possible that this right to know is also asserted in order to counter the pervasive psychopathological model, in which the desire to search, and searching at a young age, was attributed to an adoptee's personal deficiency, or the malfunctioning of the adoptive family (Müller and Perry 2001a, 15-16). While all participants commented on the emotional legacy of being adopted, and their adoption therefore producing some 'pathology', only some participants cited this as a reason for searching.

As Māori adoptees, participants have found themselves bound not only by the social expectations and cultural norms of Western European society, but also those of Māori society. As a fundamental norm and criterion of identity in Māori society, knowledge of whakapapa was a particularly powerful driver of searching. Eleven participants reported the constraints that not knowing whakapapa placed on their identification and legitimacy as Māori, as well as their participation in the Māori world (see previous chapter). Where this was particularly important to participants, searching was a necessity.

An *ethic of reciprocity* exists in tension with that of self-discovery. This ethic corresponds to adoptees' concern for their adoptive parents' feelings and reactions, as part of an understanding of adoption as a mutual commitment. Wegar (1992, 97) considers this a product of the rescue discourse within adoption; the implied debt of gratitude a form of "moral vocabulary" that renders search less socially acceptable. Mere justified a limited interest in reunion by stating she did not want to hurt her adoptive mother. Dean also cited loyalty to his adoptive family as a significant factor in delaying his search: "Like I would never ever consider looking for my birth father while my grandparents were still around…it would have been too hard on them." In Dean's case a marked lack of openness and communication regarding his adoption underscored his grandparents' sensitivity about it, leading him to suspend any notion of searching.

While it would be appealing to reduce searching or not searching to the dominance of one ethic over another (e.g. self-discovery providing greater impetus for search, and reciprocity providing barriers), Wegar (1992, 88) considers the "dilemma-ridden" nature of search deliberations around each of these ethics as more important to attend to. The conflicting ethics and their moral notions of gratitude and emancipation illuminate the conflicting discourses surrounding adoption, which adoptees must grapple with in their decisions to seek or not seek information about origins. Participants' seemingly contradictory or counter-dominant narratives may be evidence of this discursive conflict. While some participants desired biological belonging and identity, they did not necessarily want this at the expense or degradation of their adoptive ties. Rejecting the either/or biological/non-biological binary,

participants subscribed to a "both/and" position[85] in which adoptive and biological elements could co-exist, as they co-existed in their lives.

Adoptive family relationships

The adoptive family context appeared to have an additional bearing on decisions to search, in a different way to that of loyalty. Those participants who reported abuse or a somewhat strained relationship with adoptive parents (Rick, Mere, Emma, Daniel, Dean), were appreciably older (average age of 35 years) when they began searching. For Emma and Rick, their dealing with addiction issues was a factor in their waiting until later in their 20s to search for birth family information.

Because of the abuse that Rick experienced in his adoptive family, he felt compelled to "try and get away", but not necessarily *to* birth family. Rick spoke of needing to go through a personal "transition" before he felt ready to embark on search. This involved realising that "the fighting, drug-taking, drinking Māori was a creation of [his] choice" and that although he no longer attributed his situation to adoption, he nonetheless had some therapeutic work to do around his birth origins. Although it is apparent that Rick's traumatic adoptive family experience delayed his search for birth family, he distinguished himself from adoptee non-searchers. Akin to the discourse of search as pathology, he justified his search on the basis of the poor parenting he received and the lack of *comfort* he felt: "I know a lot of adoptees, some who I have met have no concerns, no desire to actually trace their parentage, they're very happy with that there, and they've created lives in that, because the parenting that they had was good… through my experience, I wasn't comfortable. There's nothing comfortable about what's going on for me…"

The remaining participants reported more positive adoptive experiences and relationships and were younger (average age of 20 years) when they began searching for birth family. One striking observation of the latter group is that of their adoptive parents' openness and communication regarding adoption that translated into action – Jenny, Donna-Marie, Shane, Rachel, Kere, Paul and Rua each mention receiving encouragement and practical support from their adoptive parents to search. Hence, it could be reasonably argued that a positive adoption experience and adoptive relationships are characterised by openness and communication about adoption, which thereby supports adoptees to seek information (see Skinner-Drawz, Wrobel, Grotevant and Von Korff, 2011, 181). This point is highlighted in Sonya's account of a discussion she had with her adoptive parents about searching: "I think because my parents were so open, I had no question about their love for me, their support for

[85] See Latchford (2019, 60) – references to adoptee identity as not a matter of either nature or nurture but of both nature and nurture; this move from either/or to both/and is poststructuralist and often feminist in its aim to sidestep binary thinking and the hierarchies it produces. To circumvent the binary, adoptee identity is posed as a product of both nature and nurture.

me, like I didn't worry about that, I was clear and tight and secure with my parents so I think I must have said to mum I was going to see if I could find out my birth mother, and then when I couldn't [because of age] I just kind of threw it on the backburner, then when I was 21, it was just like 'oh I'm going to do this, what do you think?'." Sonya's relationship with her adoptive parents, and their apparent security as adoptive parents, alleviated any concerns that Sonya might have had about disloyalty to them.

Internal versus external barriers to and facilitators of searching

As the above findings suggest, search is not a passive endeavour. For every participant, the desire to search for birth family is individual, and readiness to meet or make contact is not a given at any particular age or point in time. As much as this requires considerable internal deliberation, external facilitators (for example, adoptive parents, opportunity) sometimes made the difference in propelling participants to search. Some participants reported a state of inertia in which their concerns about searching left them unable to make a decision or take action. Daniel was concerned about the impact on his birth mother, and Donna-Marie felt overwhelmed by the import of this decision, fearful of what might eventuate. Daniel and Donna-Marie were both encouraged by loved ones to instigate the search process. Sonya was galvanised by some significant life changes and a desire to assert agency: "I think one of the catalysts for me making that decision to take that next step to find my birth mother was like, I'd had a boyfriend for about six years and I split up with him when I was overseas, so when I came back I was like 'right, I'm going to take my life into my own hands', and somewhere in the next year or so I'm gonna find my birth parents. Yep so I decided to do that…"

These comments give the sense of a tipping point, where there is a confluence or convergence of factors that lead to searching: i) being legally able to access identifying information, or being supported by social workers to do so; ii) feeling supported by adoptive family, either in terms of openness and willingness to discuss adoption, or assistance with the search itself; and iii) reaching a point of personal or life-stage development, or having worked through some personal issues, whereby the adoptee feels ready to embark on searching. Sonya, Rick and Emma each referred specifically to events in their lives that, once resolved, cleared the path for them to seek out their birth families. Becoming parents was another point at which adoptees might be prompted to search, and this was mentioned by several participants (Lisa, Rick, Daniel, Dean). Being supported or prompted by partners or significant others also featured in participant narratives, notably men (Dean, Kere, Daniel).

Search in the context of adoptee lives and narratives

A significant part of this chapter thus far has been devoted to describing what prompted participants to search, and trying to understand the extent to which this was a product of adoption experiences, and internal or external facilitators and barriers. This has felt a very 'messy' exercise – a point in participants' narratives where complexity was amplified, cause and effect was not as clearly narrated, and there were clear deviations from dominant search/reunion narratives.

The adoptee's search is a critical point in the adoption narrative; as a key decision it is the culmination of an adoptee's experiences, feelings and deliberations about what is the right course of action giving their particular circumstances and life history (Carsten 2007, 418). New opportunities or new information yielded in search "rapidly impose their own trajectory of actions, each apparently automatically leading to the next…the sense of suspense between one event, or newly discovered item of information, and the next [is] palpable" (Carsten 2007, 413). Thus, momentum builds towards contact/reunion, but prior to that, as new information "constitutive" of identity and kinship[86] is incrementally revealed, the adoptee must begin to process or make sense of this (Strathern 1999, 68; Carsten 2007, 406). The complexity of this task may be reflected in the apparent increased narrative complexity or lapses in narrative coherence observed.

The adopted individual must also manage considerable discursive tension in search. Adopted families and birth families are not supposed to co-exist; in closed adoption the adoptive family's existence was contingent on the birth family's dissolution (Modell 1994, 19). The adoptive status quo constructed and maintained through legislation, institutional practices and powerful social discourses, was then contested and undermined not only by the activism that led to the opening up of adoption, but search itself (Modell 1997, 45-6, 64). These opposing discourses, and co-existing birth and adoptive families constructed as opposing entities, are held in tension by the adoptee. This state of tension may endure for some time until the shape and form of (post)-reunion relationship is realised.

Prior to the first encounter with birth parents or family, participants received information and identifying details that enabled them to make contact. Many participants placed less emphasis on this stage in their narratives, moving quickly to describing the first meeting. Emma's account stands out for the reported meaning and impact of that moment: "I can honestly say, once I had her name, my life changed. And I changed it. That name was a connection, the first real blood connection that I'd ever had in my life, and it totally blew my mind, you know? Within a week I was gone [to search]

[86] Because kinship knowledge is coupled with identity in Western culture, when people acquire new information about their ancestry, they acquire identity (Strathern 1999, 68). In terms of kinship, new information therefore has implications not only for future relationships with birth family, but for existing relationships with adoptive family. Adoptees' deliberations about whether harm might be done to either set of relationships, are part of this processing.

(laughing)…" Here Emma falls short of making strong identity claims on the back of learning her birth mother's identity, but expresses the impact in particularly strong terms owing to the 'realness' of that blood tie. Emma's narrative highlights the tension and expectation that extended beyond search into reunion.[87]

The first encounter

Given that participants had been waiting all their lives to meet birth parents and family members, it was always the case that the first face-to-face meeting was an encounter "loaded with significance" (Donna-Marie). However, the tone and outcome of that meeting was also uncertain, and could not be predicted. Encounters ranged from positive (Donna-Marie, Dean, Shane, Emma, Sonya), "nice" or neutral (Lisa, Natasha, Paul, Rick, Rua), strained or awkward (Kere, Rachel, Rick) through to negative (Mere, Jenny). Thus, the first meeting was positive for most participants, but a strong, instant and mutual connection was expressed only by Donna-Marie.

Mere and Jenny had negative first encounters with their birth mothers, for different reasons. Mere was shocked and disappointed to find out that her mother was Māori; from Mere's way of thinking, Māori women *do no*t adopt their children out, and so Mere felt her mother's decision was unforgiveable. This meant that she was not interested in hearing about the possible reasons for her relinquishment, and while she could perceive a physical resemblance, she had no desire to connect or identify with her birth mother. Jenny's mother initially refused contact, in a particularly confronting way that she found difficult to bear:

> She didn't want anything to do with me, she just screamed at [Jenny's husband] and said 'no, that's past is past and what are you doing contacting me?' And 'I want nothing to do with this child'. So of course now I've got the rejection at birth and now the rejection in my 30s… So that really hit hard…I can just feel it now, it's just like so upset but I think the so upsetness was bigger than just what happened then, I think it was also related back to the birth thing…

[87] The term reunion can be used in several ways. It may be used to refer to an initial encounter between a birth parent and adoptee, or an ongoing relationship – contact made and then continued over time (Modell 1997, 44). It is also a contentious term. March (1997, 104) chooses to refer to 'adoptee-birth parent contact' rather than reunion, acknowledging the importance of the biological connection without creating "undue expectations of instant affinity." While recognising these issues with terminology, I use reunion and contact interchangeably, and reunion as including the first meeting and the following short-medium term period in which adoptees and birth family are becoming acquainted with one another. "Post-reunion", mentioned later, refers to the enduring relationship in the medium-long term.

A short time later, Jenny's mother made contact via letter, and this correspondence continued for a few years until their first meeting. Jenny's mother refused to provide information about her birth father, which Jenny found very difficult. For Kere, his birth mother's refusal to tell him anything about his birth father tarnished his feelings about their relationship considerably: "So the first time we met, she said 'never ask about your father and if you do I'll clam up and never talk to you again', that was the threat from the start. And she's held on to that pretty tight…And I was sitting there thinking 'all I want to know actually'…that leaves a sour taste."

Rachel's meeting with her mother was also strained, and very different to what she had anticipated:

> I felt like I was sort of having an out of body experience, it was nothing of what my dreams were, when you have this picture in your head of this movie that it's going to be amazing and you're gonna have the most amazing relationship and you're going to talk forever and it just did not happen that way. She had mental health problems, she's had drug problems and she had a really controlling partner who she's still with from what I know, so yeah it all came crashing down unfortunately of having a relationship with her.

Here Rachel's description of the meeting as an "out of body experience" speaks to the significance of this event, generating an extraordinary perceptual experience. However, contrasted against the "picture in [her] head", Rachel's out of body experience is not wholly dissociative or disembodied, rather a third-person perspective view that reinforces the distance between her preconceptions and what transpired.

Meeting birth mothers – emotional intensity without emotional connection

Most adopted people seek contact with their birth mother in the first instance. As primary relinquishing parents, birth mothers were more likely than birth fathers to be named on birth certificates and associated documentation, and therefore easier to access and contact. However, birth mothers are also of considerable emotional significance to adoptees (Howe and Feast 2001, 354); it is the birth mother who carried, nurtured and gave birth to the adoptee, a special role reified in cultural notions of "mother love", and the naturalised and elemental mother-child bond (Müller and Perry 2001b, 42; Hughes 2015, 151). Because of the strong emotions involved, reunions with birth mothers can also be the most difficult (Trinder, Howe and Feast 2004, 55).

Several participants noted the asymmetry between their emotional investment in or preparedness for the first meeting, and that of their birth mother's. Kere, Lisa, Sonya and Natasha recognised the significance of this first meeting for their birth mothers. For example, Kere noted that his mother was "blown out of the water", evident in her need to take a week's leave from work afterwards, Natasha observed that her birth mother was "shell shocked", reaching for whisky to deal with that first encounter, and Sonya reported that her mother was "completely overwhelmed", crying during their first phone call and meeting. In each of these accounts, participants not only perceived their birth mothers' responses, but recounted them as evidence that their birth and the reunion was of import. Their mothers' responses gave these first meetings an emotional intensity or charge, as Sonya describes:

> …and I think it was that thing of meeting somebody as an adult who, this person loved me and I didn't know this person…it was full on, I remember it being incredibly intense and all she wanted to do was touch me and hold me. She wanted to know all about me, know about my parents, know about my life, I think she felt guilty, and at that time she didn't want to talk about having me, why she gave me up, she said little bits but not a lot cos it hurt too much. I remember being asleep and waking up in the morning and she was sitting in the floor of my room just staring at me, which seriously freaked me out (laughter).

Several participants commented that they needed some respite from the emotional intensity, or time to 'process'. Natasha noted: "It wasn't a long meeting, maybe 30 or 40 minutes and I'd had enough. It was, not an information overload it was probably more emotional overload, I just had enough. I was like 'no I can't give you any more of my energy right now. I need to go away and have some air'."

However, this emotional intensity did not translate to an emotional connection with their birth mother; participants understood that they were not having the same emotional experience. Some of the participants reflected in hindsight that they perhaps not emotionally prepared for what it would mean to meet their birth mothers. According to Lisa: "I hadn't really thought about what it meant to contact my mother and how she might feel about me, and I guess I felt a little bit like I meant a lot to her, and I wasn't sure what she meant to me, and I let the relationship drop, I didn't stay in touch." Eventually Lisa was able to re-connect with her birth mother and they have since formed a mutually satisfying relationship.

The term "biological strangers" is often used in reference to birth parent/adopted child meetings, although unlike strangers in the normal sense of the word, the meeting between birth parents and adopted children already carries a significant amount of emotional expectation. Participants could

perceive their birth mother's guilt and trauma – while some were empathetic, most were also clear that they could not and did not want to take on that burden. Rick and Natasha in particular alluded to their birth mothers' unresolved issues with their relinquishment as a barrier to their future relationship. However, adoptees were also bringing their own issues to reunion – feelings of loss and abandonment that might make them hypersensitive to any perceived rejection, and conversely, already established (often loving) relationships with adoptive parents that might make them hypersensitive to any 'overclaiming' by birth parents.

The difference in emotional tone between adoptees and birth mothers regarding their first meeting has also been observed by Modell (1997, 50). Birth mothers were more likely to report feeling overwhelmed or instantly attached, whereas adoptees were "cooler" in their use of language and more "rational" in their focus on acquiring information and referring to genetic heritage in medical terms. Modell (1997, 63) attributes this difference to birth mothers' experience of giving birth, and their assertion (and indeed the associated cultural script) that this creates a permanent bond and undying love. In contrast, adoptees have already established an attachment with their adoptive parents, and as adults, they are not necessarily searching for unconditional, abundant parental love. As Modell (1997, 51) notes, the closest that adoptees came to expressing "passion" was their mention of "miraculous resemblances" (see Physical Resemblance section, 164).

Meeting birth fathers

Generally in adoption reunion, fewer numbers of adoptees set out to search for their birth fathers (Trinder, Feast and Howe 2004, 57). Müller and Perry (2001a, 13) suggest that this may be due to the overrepresentation of women among searchers, and their stronger identification with their birth mothers. However, in this research all participants wished to meet their birth fathers, and due to the workings of the adoption information process, this was contingent on contact with birth mothers. In several cases, participants were reliant on their birth mothers for their birth father's identity. For those who have been able to trace their birth fathers (Donna-Marie, Dean, Lisa, Shane, Paul, Sonya, Natasha, Rick, Rua), the contact has generally been experienced as less fraught than that with their birth mothers. This may reflect the differential experiences of birth mothers compared with birth fathers, i.e. birth mothers were in the position of having to give birth to and give up their children for adoption, where birth fathers were not necessarily directly involved in or may have been quite removed from that experience. Sonya summarised her interactions with her birth father as one of relative ease: "Men are different, they're really clear, he was really clear right up front, 'you are my daughter, I didn't raise

you, your parents are your parents, you're a part of my family, I love you', like, there's no bullshit. It just made it really easy."

Rick alluded to the increased significance of his birth father, and the father-son relationship. This is consistent with previous research, which has shown adopted men are more likely than adopted women to be interested in finding their birth father (Müller and Perry 2001b, 42):

> "…now if I thought confronting my abuser was the hardest thing I'd ever done, going to see your father for the first time, it's not too far away from that either…and I met him and it was bizarre, you don't have that connection, you don't have that sort of the wairua of the past… and people of that time, they don't talk about stuff, it gets hidden…
>
> …there were no photos of me. No acknowledgement. I am still no one in their life…on my father's side, yeah I'm part of it but it was a bit of mistake and we're sorry you know and they've got on with their lives and that's the bug that I bear…And I would have liked a closer relationship to be able to speak with my father but that isn't to be, it's too much for people. And I haven't pursued it because I'm not fighting for it. I fought enough to get to meet them."

Rick was ultimately disappointed by his interactions with his birth father due to his inability to engage more than superficially; as noted above, Rick attributed this lack of connection in part to not having a shared past, and the tendency of his father's generation to not want to talk about things such as illegitimately-conceived children and adoption. Rick emphasises the effort (the fight) on his part to reach out to his birth parents, in spite of what he endured in his adoptive upbringing. According to Rick, there was no equivalent effort from his parents, which prompted him to withdraw from those relationships and instead focus on the connections he had created with his wife and children.

Natasha was satisfied with a single meeting with her father, because she got what she needed in terms of affirmation: "So I met him once and it was just before he died, I went in there and he looked up at me and goes 'oh, oh yeah, you're definitely one of mine'. So he claimed me and I've taken that as true…really I got what I wanted, that's enough really."

Due to all participants' birth fathers being Māori, for most participants, their birth fathers were the primary means by which to access whakapapa information. This gave birth fathers an additional and special significance. Donna-Marie's account of the meeting with her birth father was compelling for its completeness as a story, replete with detail and dramatic tension. This conveyed something of the experience's importance to her:

> It's probably the most amazing day of my life. So when I arrived at his house, I was fucking shitting myself eh…it was like I wasn't even there, I was sort of there but not there, and it was like I couldn't handle the moment...and then I saw him for the first time. And I had got out of the car, I don't remember opening the door, it's like I sort of just floated out of the car and was just standing there completely opposite him... And I had never seen anyone in my life who looked like me. And it was like a blow to the guts, I just remember just feeling everything inside me just wrench – I nearly fell down.

The intensity of Donna-Marie's experience is reflected in her description of the embodied effects, the simultaneous dissociation and physically felt impact. This reinforces the extraordinariness of this encounter, giving rise to an altered experience of consciousness *and* reality (i.e. loss of time).

Meeting other birth family members

Beyond birth parents, other birth family members featured significantly in participants' contact experiences. In one case (Emma), relationships with birth parents have not been possible, leading to the important formation of relationships with siblings instead (O'Neill, Loughran and McAuley 2018, 1223). While these relationships are not without their tensions, they do not have the complexities sometimes associated with birth-parent-adoptee relationships. In the process of his search for birth family, Shane became aware of the existence of an older sister who was also adopted at birth. Shane and his sister enjoy a strong and special connection, based not only on their shared whakapapa, but also their common experience of closed adoption:

> …when I first met [her] it was like…being in an echo chamber, we can almost finish each other's sentences…it's really quite spooky to start with that there's this person that you only just met and you just instantly kind of get each other…we had the common experience of adoption, and we didn't have all that other baggage and shit, we had not been involved in those decisions and so that was another reason we could just chill out here, and we could swap notes and there were all sorts of parallels, but it was finally somebody I could actually relate to…

Natasha also experienced a very close connection with one of her birth siblings when they met for the first time. However, although a connection was instant, establishing common ground to communicate was still challenging:

> I had an instant connection with my brother. I just went 'wow', it was instant, it was like an attraction but not a sexual one. It was like a long-lost something, I couldn't really claim what it was. And [my birth mother] said 'oh my god, you walk the same, you talk the same, you behave the same'. My oldest sister, was really standoffish and almost really grumpy. …so we just chatted and it's like you feel like you should have something in common but you don't. So it was trying to find the common ground of communication without it being the birth mother? So getting to connect with someone that you don't know but feel like you've got this bond. It's hard to describe really.

As Jenny anticipates what it might be like to meet further birth family members (birth father's whānau, additional adopted siblings from her birth mother), she notes the difficulty in knowing exactly what those connections and relationships might be like: "…there is quite an odd feeling because there's an implied sense of belonging, an implied sense of blood tie and yet you don't know who they are, they're strangers actually. And so it's quite difficult making those connections and what's that relationship going to look like?"

A number of participants discussed meeting grandparents as part of their reconnection with birth families. There were significant differences between meetings of maternal compared with paternal grandparents; maternal grandparents were often part of the adoption decision, in some cases making this decision for the birth mother. As Sonya and Shane mentioned, this made for an awkward reunion:

> "…[my birth mother] invited me to come and meet her parents and her family…I know it was too much for her parents…they felt incredibly guilty because they forced their daughter to give me up, and they had all of these issues and prejudices that went with their daughter being pregnant to a Māori man, young and in a small, rural town, it wasn't the done thing…they could see that their daughter instantly loved me and so I think it blew their head off…So I ended up leaving, and I actually didn't have anything to do with them at all for about 8 years." (Sonya)

> "…and there's quite a story to how that didn't work because my grandparents were kind of racist… [my] grandmother, who basically wanted to tidy up the mess and get it out of town … and that caused this real discomfort at times…and I adored her but there were a couple of occasions where there was just this awkwardness…and you're a kid…you're trying to step

around everybody else's issue, and it's like I'm this problem to everybody, and you just felt like saying (whistling) 'too late, I'm here, get the hell over it'." (Shane)

In contrast, those participants who met paternal grandparents reported a more positive experience. Like birth fathers, paternal grandparents were one step removed from the difficulty and trauma of the adoption decision, meaning that contact did not have the same negative emotional connotations, of guilt and loss. Their lack of complicity positioned them as involuntarily affected by the adoption process. Traditions of whāngai, and more specifically, grandparents raising the eldest *mokopuna* (grandchild), reinforced a cultural narrative of the abhorrence of adoption. While participants accepted that the prejudicial and racist attitudes exhibited by their maternal grandparents were of the time, this also painted maternal grandparents in a less sympathetic light or as less sympathetic characters, against the birth father and whānau.

The first meeting between adoptee and birth family members is the beginning of a 'working out' process, where both parties negotiate the bounds of their connection, in the absence of any blueprint or social guidelines for such a relationship. There is often no explicit articulation of any expectations or needs (Müller and Perry 2001b, 46; Trinder, Howe and Feast 2004, 43; Affleck and Steed 2001, 43). What is apparent in these experiences of a birth family meeting is that they are more than an exchange; as much as each party is bringing themselves, their experiences, expectations and hopes to the meeting, the outcome is dependent on the interaction between.

For instance, biological kinship discourses dictate that biological connection is inalienable, persistent and 'true', therefore participants expected to *feel* a connection in some way (Müller and Perry 2001b, 45). However, for many participants in this research, the first contact with their birth family fell short of these expectations, the connections somewhat less than what they had anticipated. For others, the first meeting yielded what they needed. Paul found that meeting his birth family provided 'evidence' of a biological parentage, which was an embodied experience for him: "I sort of felt a sense of relief like 'oh finally'. Finally I'm normal, whatever normal means, I was relieved that after all these years of not knowing how you were brought to the earth or produced or what your whakapapa was, at least now I had a starting point, a line in the sand." What these first encounters mean for subsequent birth family contact is explored next.

Physical resemblance

Physical resemblance was discussed by all 15 participants throughout their interviews, which speaks to its significance. Its articulation as a topic without any interviewer guidance indicates that "tracing

lines of similarity" is a substantial focus for adoptees (Hoffmann-Riem 1990, 257). However, in spite of its significance, this alone was not sufficient for a connection to be felt. It seems that there also needed to be some alignment of expectations and needs – birth parents needed to be able to offer what the adoptee was seeking, which could not be known ahead of the meeting itself and was not necessarily known by the adoptees themselves. Where physical resemblance was not observed, this did lead to a perceived lack of connection; this was the case with Kere, who cited this as a significant factor in conjunction with his positive relationship with his adoptive parents, and his birth mother withholding paternity details.

Six participants could see physical resemblance in that first meeting with their birth parent, and in some cases this was a profound experience. Rachel was struck in a very positive way by her physical resemblance with her birth mother, despite disappointment at the lack of connection with her. Rachel drew on a metaphor of being 'struck' by the experience: "Honestly it was like being hit in the face by a bucket, I just couldn't believe it. When I met my birth mother it was like having a cold water just straight on me because I just looked at her and went 'oh my god' and as I get older, I look more and more like her, which is funny...And yeah, we look very similar and it was awesome, it was the best feeling." Similarly to Donna-Marie's description of her meeting with her birth father, Rachel noted both dissociative or disembodied and strongly embodied effects.

Mere also described an altered sense of self arising from her resemblance to her birth mother: "Do you know, the craziest thing is when I was sitting in that room with the birth mother, and we probably looked a little bit similar, but it was the mannerisms, she did things, and I did the same thing, like we sat the same way or something like that… and my husband even looked at me and I went (laughter), and so yeah that was crazy, it was a bit déjà vu-ey actually." Here, Mere's description articulates her feeling of having "already seen" (the literal translation of déjà vu) this situation. What she has "already seen" is herself, now observed in another person for the first time, the sense of familiarity generated from self-recognition. Mere's experience is a "reversal of the disembodiment" described by many adoptees growing up apart from biological kin (Melosh 2002b, 248).

Physical resemblance is widely reported as a preoccupation for adoptees throughout adoption literature (Müller and Perry 2001a, 22). Although physical resemblance was not cited as a primary reason for searching in this study, it was a recurring theme in participants' narratives: noted as lacking in adoptive upbringing, an interest, curiosity or yearning leading up to contact/reunion and a key feature of the first and subsequent encounters with birth family members.

A strong interest in physical resemblance is understandable given the potential to address two challenging aspects of being adopted: "being different" and "not knowing". For adoptees in this study, similarly to those interviewed by Modell (1994, 133), a "foremost sign of difference was not looking

like anyone else in the family." Furthermore, lacking knowledge of biological origins was equated with a lack of self-knowledge – a gap that physical and other resemblances promise to fill by providing some answers to the question of "who am I like?" For the adoptee who differs significantly from their adoptive family in either looks, temperament or proclivities, their sense of who they are in comparison to primary attachment figures is limited to points of difference, difference from rather than identification with. While Latchford (2019) asserts that identity can be built equally well on difference, this is challenged by the experiences of several participants in this study – for Shane and Lisa, to be unlike anyone else *was* to feel somewhat alien and disconnected (Groza and Rosenberg 1998, 53, 55). As well as impact on self-experience, differentiation can impact negatively on ontological status and subjecthood. To be differentiated socially is to be de-normalised, subordinated and othered, an unpleasant and undesirable experience[88] (Latchford 2019, 10, 12; Diver 2014, 24). Thus, the allure of likeness, biologically-based or otherwise, may account for participants' strong interest in resemblance. Pursuit of physical and other resemblance is an important part of the adoptee's (remedial) identity work.

Not all participants found the resemblances they had hoped for – in Kere's case, this seems to have been a significant but not the only factor in the lack of closeness he felt with his birth mother. The majority of participants did find a physical resemblance to birth family members, some quite striking. Jenny, Donna-Marie, Rachel, Natasha, Rick and Sonya in particular noted a high degree of physical similarity to at least one family member, and this carried with it a strong feeling of closeness that was reciprocated, and an assurance of cohesion. This suggests one of two things: a "looking glass" or mirroring effect, which itself gives rise to closeness or cohesion, or the perception that a close physical resemblance indicates or extends to other resemblances.

Social validation or the consensus of others regarding physical resemblance appears to be an important part of receiving its full benefit; Rachel, Donna-Marie, Jenny, Natasha, Shane and Emma each reference the observations of others in noticing or affirming the resemblance. For perhaps the first time, participants are able to engage in "resemblance talk." Resemblance talk is an everyday form of public discourse that expresses blood relatedness and affirms family relationships based on resemblance as "tangible evidence of kinship." This discourse "reinforces the assumed natural order of things and supports a hierarchy of legitimacy, in which a clear physical resemblance to family

[88] Drawing on Foucault, Latchford (2019, 10) explores why differentiation breeds ontological hierarchies: "differentiation is an aspect or apparatus of normalisation and subject formation…the measurement or (de)valuation of difference is a disciplinary tactic at work within all social institutions, including the institution of adoption…with respect to adoption, therefore…discourse, which both differentiates and pathologises adopted subjects and families, sustains a hierarchy that normalises the blood tie as a kind of family tie that is ontologically 'real' or more real than the adoptive tie."

members confers greater legitimacy, while the legitimacy of those who lack a resemblance to the family is questioned, subjecting them to stigma" (Becker et al. 2005, 1301). Thus, for adoptive families resemblance talk can be problematic, challenging their legitimacy while putting them under pressure to explain their physical dissimilarity or similarity. Conversely, for adoptees post-contact/reunion, their new-found resemblance and subsequent participation in resemblance talk can be particularly powerful, linking them into the institution of biological family and granting them a biogenetic identity. The affirming and validating nature of this is conveyed in participants' descriptions of feeling "ten foot high and shining" (Donna-Marie), "grounded" (Rachel, Rick) and "really knowing" and accepting themselves (Rachel).

Natasha notes that she finds herself almost making up or compensating for the lack of biological resemblance talk, still, well into post-reunion: "I still do, I'm the one that's probably doing more of the 'oh my god, look at that baby photo, it looks like me', trying to connect in with the family. I still have that sort of stuff going on, trying to have that genetic familiarity connection. I'm the one still doing some of that because I still feel like I'm a little bit over there and that's that family and this is that family." What is interesting about Natasha's comment here is the ongoing or enduring need for reinforcement of genetic connection via resemblance. Natasha attributes this to a residual feeling of being slightly "outside" her birth family.

For Shane the self-knowledge or understanding generated from resemblances extends beyond identifying with a biological relative, to a freeing or emancipatory effect: "…there have been occasions where somebody's made a comment about some trait and it's like 'oh ok, that's where that comes from you know?' and when you recognise that, you're no longer captive to it, you can be aware of that tendency…you can see it in somebody else, 'oh ok now I get it, maybe I don't need to…'" An explanation or attribution of appearance, mannerisms, character traits or habits in terms of family resemblance in this case relieves Shane of the burden of individual responsibility, offering a more appealing narrative to that of 'pathological adoptee'.

Ongoing relationships – the work of birth family kinship

Other adoption researchers (Sachdev 1992, quoted in Müller and Perry 2001b, 45) have noted that initial reactions at the first meeting between adoptee and birth parents are not predictive of how the relationship with birth family will continue. Certainly, Jenny's very negative initial interaction with her birth mother was followed by a number of years of pleasant contact, and also with birth siblings. Kere has also maintained contact with his birth mother, reporting that over time she has relaxed considerably around him. Although Mere has not seen her birth mother since that initial meeting, she

has had contact with her deceased birth father's siblings, and maintains contact with some of her birth siblings.

Both Jenny and Mere have additional birth siblings who were also adopted out that they are yet to meet. These, as with all birth family relationships, will require negotiation, which is "tricky", as Jenny notes, because of the "unknowingness and unsureness" of relationship boundaries. Jenny and Dean noted that distance and time create barriers to more frequent face to face contact and potentially closer relationships. Some participants felt they do not have the time or the energy to invest in these new relationships as well as their adoptive family relationships, and so have settled for infrequent contact. Rachel for example, felt a need to moderate contact to a more comfortable pace than perhaps birth family members wanted: "And sometimes I just need to take things really slow and that's my learning process, it's not that I want to say no to them but it's more about taking it really easy because I get a bit overwhelmed with things sometimes."

Emma enjoys a very positive relationship with her birth sisters, which has involved weekly contact for the past eight years. What is significant about this relationship is its bi-directionality – Emma occupies a valued position in the family as a sister and auntie, as well as the relationship meeting her needs. However, Emma noted that her entry to the whānau did "upset something"; it brought the tragic circumstances of her birth mother's suicide to the fore, leading her birth brother to refuse contact. More recently, Emma has felt the need to assert some boundaries in the relationship with her sisters to alleviate their growing dependence on her. Thus, as with other familial relationships, birth family relationships ebb and flow, which require attention and ongoing negotiation to maintain.

Shane's extended family have also expressed the value that they place on Shane and his sister's presence within the whānau, and conversely, *their* loss for the time that they were not present. Shane recounted a particularly moving sentiment shared by one of his cousins at one of their extended whānau gatherings: "…we were saying goodbyes and my cousin just looked at me and goes 'you missed out on us, but we missed out on you', it just floored me. I wish I was there and I can't get that back."

Donna-Marie is also aware of her value to her birth whānau, a product of the significant time and effort she has consciously invested in building relationships since first making contact. What supported Donna-Marie's positive connection with her birth whānau initially was the way in which her father welcomed her in unconditionally, underpinned by the notion of *whānau*. Nonetheless, Donna-Marie estimates that it took ten years to establish relationships with her siblings to the point that she felt "that my siblings were my siblings."

In that ten years, there were moments when Donna-Marie had doubts about whether she was establishing the connection that she had hoped for:

> I'm just like 'why do I keep coming down here?' I'm coming here looking for something that I don't know if I'm going to find, this wanting to have this deep meaningful whānau connection but it's still just on the surface. You're still in that real in-between phase, there's moments of real joy and connection and then feeling all awkward and not quite sure what to do, when to kind of be there or when's the time to go.

Remaining engaged irrespective of her doubts helped Donna-Marie see those testing times through. Over 25 years on, Donna-Marie feels that her relationship with her birth whānau is only becoming deeper, more meaningful and robust as time passes.

Similarly to the 'work' involved in, and that distinguishes adoptive relationships (Modell 1994, 14), participants found that their developing relationships with birth family members also require 'work' – at the least, investment of time and energy ("the steady accumulation of everyday events": Carsten 2000, 697), give and take, and the negotiation of the shape and form of the relationship. Adoptive kinship is distinct from biological kinship (Modell 1994, 14), but post-adoption biological kinship is *also* distinct from biological kinship, something that participants were perhaps surprised by and not quite prepared for. Rua referred to her tendency to compare her birth family relationships to what they might have been if she had not been adopted; in other words – how are these relationships different from or less than 'as if non-adopted'? She arrived at the conclusion that she needs to change her expectations of her relationships with birth family, in order to free herself of feelings of disappointment and loss.

> I feel like I have three families. And I juggle between them all and it's not easy (laughing) because with my whānau I grew up with, I know the emotions and I know how we feel, I know how we roll and I know what we do and stuff. But on either side of my birth parents I don't know any of those and it's trying to figure that out and I do get overwhelmed. I'll just take off here and there because I don't feel settled for the whole time…I know my relationships with my whānau are never going to be how I thought they would be, I think I wanted them or everything to be here all the time…

There is still a 'not knowing' element of being-adopted in reunion with biological family, however it is now a 'not knowing' of the people behind the immediate identities, and what this relationship will develop into. The fragmentation produced by adoption – biological on the one hand, compared with legal and social on the other (Browning 2005, 166) – endures in reunion. It is still carried by and is unsettling at times for the adoptee.

Manifestations of loss in reunion

The meta-theme of loss emerges once again at the point of reunion with birth family, in two prominent themes: firstly, participants' encounters with their birth mothers' experience of loss and stigmatisation; and secondly, the loss of time and nurture within the birth family. These losses and differences, produced by adoption, persist and impact significantly on the connections that participants felt they were able to make with their birth families, even over the long-term. The length of time post-contact/reunion (at the time of interview) ranged between 13 and 31 years, with an average of 23 years. It is still the case that only a relatively small proportion of studies have explored reunion outcomes beyond the first weeks and months (Clapton 2018, 1).

Troubled relationships with birth mothers – a relationship begun in trauma

Relationships with birth mothers were much less likely to be close (cited by two participants), and much more likely to be described as tense (6 participants), involving no contact (3 participants), or distant (2 participants)[89] at the time of interview. Eight participants attributed difficulties in the relationship to factors that lay with their birth mothers – primarily mental health problems and residual emotional trauma from the adoption. A difficulty for adoptees was their becoming aware of their birth mother's loss of them as an infant – it can contribute to adoptees feeling guilt or responsibility for an event over which they had no control (their conception and relinquishment), and also for their re-entry. Shane found further contact destabilising as he came to learn of the decline in his birth mother's circumstances following his adoption: "What she would have been like if that hadn't have happened, I don't know…and then I carried that, and then at some point I just thought 'no actually, no', and I mean she got onto her third and fourth marriage and it's like 'no, no', she's got to deal with that herself…her decisions are hers not mine."

Implicit in participants' narratives was the hope of being reunited with a warm and nurturing but emotionally reflexive *mother*. As Rick iterated in his case, expectations of *how a mother ought to be*, were brought to bear on the birth mother-child relationship: "the trouble is that my mother's still unwell in a sense so she still wants to take stuff, it's like 'that's not what your role is as a mother, your role is to give and be supportive, not to take'." Based on the meanings associated with mother and parent, participants were also quick to recognise the difference between the mother who had adopted and raised them (for all intents and purposes, their 'real' mother), and the mother who had given birth

[89] Drawing on Gladstone and Westhues' (1998, 179-181) taxonomy of adult adoptee-birth relative relationships. Two participants' birth mothers had died.

to them (Modell 1997, 60-1). For some participants, their birth mother's emotional intensity upon reunion breached that distinction, prompting their withdrawal.

The thinness of a purely biological relationship – blood is thicker than water, but thinner than time

A sense of not being able to make up for the childhood spent apart from birth family members was felt in particular moments, reinforcing adoptive loss, and giving adoptive difference its "doomed quality" (Carsten 2000, 691) even in the post-reunion phase. The relationship between Sonya and her birth mother broke down when Sonya's mother and sister came to live with Sonya and her partner. Sonya had presumed that a biological "seed of sameness" would ensure compatibility, underestimating the difference that their different life experiences and lifetime apart would make. One specific disagreement emphasised that Sonya's birth mother's loyalties were with Sonya's birth sister rather than Sonya, the daughter she had raised over her birth daughter: "…because my sister I felt was wrong about something that she'd done but my birth mother said it didn't matter if she was wrong, she was still gonna go with my birth sister, which in her head is right and proper cos she's her daughter and I'm actually not…I'm only [her] birth daughter, I'm not her daughter." This was a very painful realisation for Sonya; the distinction dashed the hope that the original mother-daughter relationship could be fully restored, and reinforced that the status of the reunited birth mother/adopted child connection is somewhat 'lesser'.

Despite Donna-Marie's positive experience in establishing a relationship with her birth family, she also recognised the difference that being adopted had made. On a couple of occasions her lack of shared family history was exposed – either in her absence from family memories, or her struggle to care for her dying father, not knowing him in an 'everyday' sense. Akin to Sonya, these were painful realisations for Donna-Marie:

> …we were all taking turns caring for him and it was the only time to feel, after I'd known him for 25 years and I'd been so closely involved and to then suddenly feel like a fish out of water because I didn't know all the things I needed to know, because they're things that you know from intimately sharing a home and growing up with somebody…I felt awkward with him for the first time…there was sort of a blank hole which I understood what was happening and why but it made me feel pretty sad…Time is thicker than blood, you can't remake up for the childhood that you didn't have…

Such types of feelings and experiences emerged in spite of participants largely expressing that they were not in need of or seeking *parents* from their reunion with birth family. In the process of meeting and forming relationships with birth family members, the flawed assumption that "biology + contact/reunion = as if not adopted" was revealed; participants were confronted with the limits of a purely biological connection, and propelled into uncharted relationship territory, common observations across adoption reunion literature (Affleck and Steed 2001, 47; Modell 1994, 164; Harness 2008, 152; Müller and Perry 2001b, 45; Marshall and McDonald 2001, 232-3; Browning 2005, 63, 170).

Ironically and sadly, the two members of the adoption triad most negatively affected by the events of adoption (birth mothers and adoptees), were more likely to be alienated from one another as a result. Relationships with birth fathers were reported by participants as being more favourable; of 9 participants who had met their birth fathers, six deemed the relationship to be either 'close' or 'moderately close'. Significantly, four participants were prevented from knowing the identity of their birth father due to this information being withheld by their birth mother, much to the disappointment and despair of participants, and to the detriment of the birth mother-adoptee relationship (Passmore and Feeney 2009, 112). Relationships with birth siblings were the most favourable according to participants, freed of the birth and adoption-related turmoil; eight participants evaluated these as close or moderately close. Due to the demographic composition of participants' birth families, birth fathers and siblings were predominantly Māori. Thus, relationships with Māori whānau members were also more likely to be categorised as 'close' or 'moderately close'. Several participants (Rick, Donna-Marie, Shane, Sonya, Natasha) felt they were more readily included within their Māori extended whānau, their adoptive difference seemingly of lesser consequence. Whether this is a product of the concept and practice of whānau generally, or of their whānau specifically, is unclear however.

Being part of a whānau

Certainly, Rick, Sonya, Donna-Marie and Shane's experiences of being with their birth extended whānau fit aspects of the 'classical' definition – more extensive than the European nuclear family unit, encompassing multiple generations, living in close proximity, and with a high degree of cooperation and co-existence in daily life (Metge 1995, 35-7). Each of these participants felt included within the wider whānau simply on the basis of their whakapapa, rather than it being contingent on shared history. For Shane, there are two characteristics of his extended whānau that are particularly special: the inclusiveness and openness that accords him equal belonging with other whānau members, and a naturalised, organic and un-self-conscious enactment of whānau that mitigates his somewhat 'artificial' re-entry as an adult.

> …cos they live in this whole bunch of houses, I call it whānau alley, a bunch of houses close together with aunties and cousins… we have this annual get together and it's an excuse for a *hāngī* (earth oven) and a piss up…So you look across at all of our whānau, there's Pasifika over here, there's gingas over here, there's black ones over there, but we're all part of the same whakapapa, and we don't actually make those distinctions… there's this little comment [my auntie] made, and she goes 'I look around, I don't know who they all are, I just know they're ours'…they just do things [i.e. laying down a hāngī], they don't have some big tikanga thing that they're fulfilling, they're just behaving as they behave.

These extended whānau gatherings provide rich lived experiences of being part of te ao Māori, in the most 'natural' way, through a Māori whānau – in stark contrast to Shane's adoptive upbringing. Shane reported that as a young adoptee connecting with his whānau for the first time, he found the extended family gatherings intense and overwhelming.

Donna-Marie also notes the value of birth whānau for orientation to the Māori world and relationships, and learning how to 'be Māori': "I think when I got to meet my own family and feel what aroha and whānau actually meant in terms of from and within Māori, then I actually knew how to be Māori and how to connect with other Māori on that level, because I think that's the thing that makes the cultural connection."

Rick enjoyed being acknowledged and included by wider whānau members, but found that that wasn't quite all he wanted or needed in terms of connection: "…the ones who are very accepting of me were my father's sisters and the cousins. So that bit more filtered down…The other whānau will accept it cos they just see it as whāngai… my relationship is probably that one off the whānau because it's still too much for them, whereas with the whānau out here, fine. Linked in, I'm part of it, we have that sense of 'yeah cos you're just a cuzzie, oh sweet cuz'. But that's as far as that one goes." The use of the terms "filtered down" and "as far as that one goes" speak to the less direct or slightly removed acceptance Rick has received from his whānau, not encompassing his birth parents. Because of his abusive childhood, Rick felt hopeful that meeting his birth family would be a very positive experience: "I did have expectations…I was thinking is it going to be happy happy joy joy and I'm going to be connected to this great whānau…maybe it will be amazing now that I'm hooked in…I can see it's easy to have expectations because it has to be better than the shit I was brought up with."

In contrast to Donna-Marie and Shane's experiences, Rick's birth father was not with him in his interactions with extended whānau. Although a number of participants went on to forge relationships with wider whānau members independently of their birth parents (a positive reunion outcome), that initial introduction with birth parents is important and advantageous. It embeds the

birth-parent-child relationship into a wider network of familial relationships (Modell 1997, 58).

Friends, family or whānau?

In Western European culture, a "relative" is both a category and a role, positioned within a kinship system and with prescribed behaviours or conduct (Schneider 1980, 26). In the case of reuniting birth family members, cultural definitions and personal experiences of 'mother', 'father', 'parent', 'child', and 'sibling' carry particular understandings and expectations which have a bearing on the developing relationships. Even from the first meeting, however, participants recognised that their connection differed in important ways from what might be expected of biological or 'blood' relatives. Firstly, while biology might entail likeness, which was taken as proof of kinship, they did not know each other instantly; a relationship had to be created for that to eventuate, rendering the birth relationship as fictive as the adoptees' adoptive family ties (Modell 1997, 51). In addition, feelings of love and attachment were not automatic, highlighting the limits of the birth relationship "when habit and custom are not there to solidify the ties" (Modell 1997, 63).

Because birth family relationships deviate from bionormative kinship, and lack a culturally defined 'script' or 'map' to guide their development (Passmore and Feeney 2009, 102; Modell 1997, 64), birth relatives may "try out" various elements from enduring reciprocal relationships. Parent-child or sibling, patronage, friendship, or extended family ties are some of the relationship forms that emerge from reunion (Modell 1997, 49; Passmore and Feeney 2009, 103). Most participants resisted their birth mothers' maternal advances because they did not want for a mother figure, and in Sonya's case, living as parent, child and sibling proved not to be feasible due to a difference in values and lack of shared history. Thus, very few participants developed a parent-child relationship as it is commonly understood, and none with their birth mothers; however Donna-Marie, Dean and Shane forged relationships with their birth fathers that could be described in this way. Relationships with siblings as siblings were established by Donna-Marie, Emma, Natasha and Shane, and may have been possible if circumstances had been different for Jenny. For both Sonya and Rua, this friendship with their fathers entailed a level of intimacy or closeness, and an acknowledgement of the genealogical connection, without the requirements of frequent contact or emotional intensity. Lisa and Rua reported having achieved a similar level of friendship with their birth mothers.

Donna-Marie was arguably the most 'successful' in terms of integrating biological and social worlds across her adoptive and birth families. She felt her freedom to move between her families was enabled by the establishment of a strong base or 'home' with her partner, arriving at a balance of mobility and stability that could be described as a dispersed belonging or kinship: "As an adoptee

you've got all these backdoors, in all your families, you're quite mobile, 'I'm everywhere but nowhere'…I'm not in any one place but I'm everywhere. As long as I have somewhere that I can call home. You can take what you need and contribute what you can positively…I belong in lots of places and I am loved in lots of different places but I don't have to rely on it for my everything." Nonetheless, Donna-Marie concedes that there is a difference between her birth family and her adoptive family in terms of the sense of obligation and expectation: "In my birth families anyway you get a few more passes for absences. In my adoptive family they expect the full commitment of a daughter because I am." Thus, although Donna-Marie's relationship with her birth family most closely aligns with the 'script' of a bionormative family, the adoptive difference is never entirely obviated.

In the same way, Natasha characterises her relationships with adoptive and birth families as mobile in that she moves between them. This is only possible however, because of the acceptance of Natasha's adoption status between family members:

> Living in an unknown place is comfortable for me, I could see it not being comfortable for others but I can belong where I choose, and when I want a bit of this I'll go there to that family and when I want a bit of that I'll go to this family…So you can pick and choose but that's only because I'm welcome in both…when I self-perceived that I wasn't welcome by my elder sister, I didn't go there, I wouldn't expose myself to that, I just kept myself nice and safe in the family that raised me. But now that it's all open and hunky dory I can get what I need from both and I'm safe in both and loved in both.

Extended family linkages featured significantly in participants' post-reunion experiences, particularly with regards to Māori whānau. As a model of biological connection, extended family kinship incorporates generational difference and varying degrees of intimacy and distance, while acknowledging the 'natural' or biological bonds between individuals (Modell 1997, 58). Extended whānau is also the primary social unit of Māori society (Edwards, McCreanor and Moewaka-Barnes 2007, 4), and for several participants (Natasha, Donna-Marie, Shane, Rick, Sonya), a common way that their birth families gather and function together. The emphasis on non-nuclear intergenerational kinship ties, while initially foreign for some adoptees, is potentially a more comfortable context for birth relative-adoptee relationships. Where the ethic of care (manaakitanga) is extended to all who are kin by whakapapa irrespective of specific delineation,[90] the lack of shared history is less of an obstacle.

[90] For example, in Māori extended whānau, relatives of the same generation are all termed 'cousin', and relatives of an older generation are 'auntie' or 'uncle' irrespective of their genealogical proximity. Other terms of endearment extended to non-relatives are those of '*whaea*' and '*matua*', literally mother and father (Fleming 2018, 28-9). As cited by Selby

However, even within this more flexible whānau relation (Brandt 2013, 121), birth parents and children were still recognised as such. While the tradition and practice of whāngai means that the stigma associated with not raising a biological child, or not being raised by a biological parent is considerably less, the importance of the genealogical relation remains. Being raised outside the whānau, by Pākehā, is another thing entirely. As alluded to by some birth whānau in quotes mentioned above (168), compared to a whāngai arrangement, closed stranger adoption meant that those mokopuna were indeed lost to them.

A shared focus on the raising of children, whether it be the children of adoptees, or those of other birth relatives, appeared to strengthen and solidify the reunited birth whānau. This is one way in which the reunited adoptee and birth family unit can 'make sense' in terms of function and conform to the conventions of biological kinship – if not making up for the absence or loss of the adopted children themselves. Shane, Natasha, Dean, Lisa and Sonya each spoke about the importance of linking their children into their birth families, as a "gradual widening of the circle" (Shane), not only so that their children might enjoy the benefits of biological connection that they missed out on, but because this is what families 'do':

> Yeah I've got way past those conversations with the siblings,[91] it's sort of like 'hey what's the kids doing, when's the next event, are you going to come up, are you doing-', you know that sort of conversation now. It's much more that family expected stuff…It's looking after each other, they are my family, they are my blood, do anything for them. (Natasha)

Children are able to play a role in maintaining contact with birth family, and provide a focus separate from but inclusive of the adoptee, for activities of family-building. For participants who do not have children of their own (Emma, Donna-Marie), a focus on nieces and nephews fulfils a similar function in the post-reunion relationship.

For Māori and Pākehā whānau alike, the primary function of families is to nurture and raise the next generation, to reproduce in both the biological and sociological senses of the word. Adoptees spend their childhoods outside of the biological family, and return as adults; this constitutes a significant absence most well understood by birth mothers who meet their "once-lost baby" as a "no-longer-child" (Modell 1997, 52, 55, 63). There are consequences not only for the parent-child relation,

(1994, 146): "there are no first and second and third cousins in Maori whānau, and there are no cousins 'once removed' or by marriage. Whānau are whānau and responsibilities to one another are clear."

[91] By 'those conversations', Natasha is referring to her and her birth siblings' conscious non-engagement with their mother's interference in their relationship. Their choice is to focus on a more constructive, future-focused mode of engagement with each other.

but also for the *role* of the wider family and their relationship with and to the adoptee. Where a biological relative has been neither cared for, nor a carer within the family unit, *who are they in relation to the family*?

These are the difficult questions of kinship and family identity, which arise out of the reunion of adoptees with birth families. They are a slight 'aside' from the self- or personal identity that adoptees tend to focus on in reunion. Contact with birth family members contributes directly to adoptee identity through the exchange of biographical or genealogical information and determination of resemblances. However, relationships contribute something different. Participants in this study have elucidated the importance of *being-with-whānau* in terms of their re-orientation to the Māori world, learning how to *be* Māori, *with* other Māori. In a world that places considerable value on relationship and collectivity, this type of post-reunion contact promises to strengthen adoptees' Māori social and group identity.

The following sections focus on two of the most 'fruitful' outcomes for participants as a result of reunion, which also support identity in different ways. The first – constructing an origin story, supports an adoptee's narrative identity, the identity constructed in and through their story of their life (McAdams 2011, 99). The second – learning about whakapapa, provides adoptees with what is the quintessential marker of Māori identity (O'Carroll 2013, 5).

Outcomes of contact and reunion

Constructing and narrating a whole origin story

Search and reunion yielded important information and details that participants utilised to augment their adoption entrance narratives and construct a more complete and coherent origin story. There were variations in the configurations of origin stories told by participants however: Dean's origin story was comprised of his own observations and information from his birth father due to his adoptive family's secrecy and non-disclosure regarding his adoption; Emma spoke of her birth origins rather than an adoptive family entrance narrative; Daniel had not met his birth parents at the time of the interview, and Mere had only limited interest in what her birth mother had to say about her origins. The salience of the origin story also differed among participants; Paul for instance, had not discussed his origins with either his adoptive parents or his birth parents, and Rua had only recently begun to enquire about her origins. In stark contrast, Donna-Marie and Shane compiled very detailed origin stories drawing on multiple information sources.

Fragments and truths

Ascertaining the 'truth' of one's origins and biological past is a compelling quest for many adoptees, but adoptees quickly learn that as people articulate their own versions of the past, narrative truths are not only unattainable but also unreliable (Wills 2015, 46-7). Shane spoke most explicitly about his need to construct a coherent origin narrative, and the difficulties in doing so, dealing with different versions of events, or contradictory "tellings".

> …whether it was because I didn't have the courage to ask, or whether it was just too complicated, I eventually sort of gave up and just left a whole lot of loose ends there that I felt like I can't resolve that…My birth mother can be quite open in some ways but then she'll edit out certain details, and so I've sort of constructed all of my identity on something and then bang, somebody'll come along and just yank the rug and they'll give me another detail that knocks over all of that previous narrative that I've created, it's just very destabilising you know, up here (gesturing to head), cos you live in a narrative, and you construct that narrative based on what you're told growing up and if you have to suddenly fill in all those gaps as an adult…I don't hold these stories too tightly anymore…

The issue of multiple or varying accounts was also raised by Natasha and Rua. In Rua's case, she understands that her birth mother's fabricated account might be a way of dealing with the trauma of relinquishment: "…she's shared a couple of different stories… But I think it's still her coming to terms of what's really happened. She carries a lot of hurt for giving me up…" Shane eventually arrived at a more pragmatic position with regards to the stories he was told:

> Because it was like 'well they've told themselves this version of the story, and humans do that where they tell themselves in this story that puts them in a favourable light, and they actually believe that, and is it untrue? What are the facts? And so I think I got to a point where it didn't matter as much and I could leave it alone and not gnaw away on that bone and just keep bloody chewing my own arm off…and just letting people be human and not trying to drag them over the coals for something that they did, a mistake they made 50 years ago.

Shane's use of metaphor conveys several ideas: his intense focus on uncovering the 'true' story of his conception and relinquishment and difficulty letting go, to his own detriment or entrapment.

Sensitive information about their conception (i.e. as a result of non-consensual sex) was provided to Natasha and Emma, and suggested to Kere by birth relatives. Kere was informed that "it's

not a flash story", but nevertheless he still wanted to hear because, as he said, "it's still my story." Natasha and Emma were both shocked by the revelations; Natasha was told by her birth mother at their second meeting, and Emma learnt from official documentation she received. Neither Natasha nor Emma wished to dwell on these events, distancing themselves slightly, but they did describe having empathy for their birth mothers and what they must have endured. Emma understood that such news had the potential to impact negatively on her self-concept and wellbeing, if she let it:

> The lady at the adoption centre said 'there are court-subpoenaed documents that you can get because you have the medical history and you deserve to know this', and I'm like I don't need those documents cos I already know, and I don't need to have the burden of that on me, because the burden of that at the moment is lying with the people that it should be…so me knowing that, and me knowing me, I would use it in a really spiteful way and a very destructive way, and it wouldn't actually bring about any healing for anybody.

Emma chose *not* to know more than the barest of details, recognising the detriment of a full account, unnecessary for her purposes of understanding her birth origins. This highlights that constructing an origin story is much more than 'fact-finding' or detective work, not simply 'knowing' as opposed to 'not knowing'. What might be pursued, known or discovered must be considered in light of its value (or not) to self, identity and narrative. These are matters of meaning rather than 'truth'.

Weighing up 'what if?'

As much as adoption entrance narratives are constructed to provide the adopted individual some background and basis, as demonstrated earlier, there are gaps and issues left unresolved. Some gaps may be somewhat filled through the provision of additional non-identifying information about birth parents and birth circumstances, but in the case of each of the participants in this study, consideration of the 'profits' compared to the losses of their adoption (Marshall and McDonald 2001, 205) was ultimately answered through meeting birth parents and family members.

Some participants cited specific questions that they sought answers to. Shane's narrative was most explicit in terms of his pursuit of information and understanding as well as conscious reflection on what was or what might have been: "…it's never a straightforward equation where it would have been so much better, if life would have been easier, I would have had this wonderful upbringing with my culture, you know, but…what could have been different, and what if, what if, what if?…" Others were less explicit, incorporating new details from their 'fact-finding' implicitly within their narratives.

The questions posed and details collated by participants are reflective of the dialectical tensions of adoption entrance narratives identified by Krusiewicz and Wood (2001). These are discussed below.

Desire versus rejection

Being wanted by either birth parent was noted as being highly significant by several participants. In some situations the participants were able to reconstruct their entrance narratives and challenge previously held impressions of rejection. Even though the reported desire of birth families to have kept participants within their care would not change the material outcome, its symbolic value was considerable. This was evident in the way in which participants described what they were told.

In Dean's case, knowing that both sides of the family wished to raise him provided a very pleasing narrative resolution. For Rachel, learning that her birth uncle had applied to adopt her was a profound realisation, eliciting feelings of happiness as well as sadness. Upon learning that her mother wrote letters to the court and Social Welfare three months after her adoption, trying to get her back, Emma had the following response: "So, for me, knowing that I was wanted is actually a huge game changer, because I've premised my entire life on being a failure and on not being wanted, and so now it's like 'fuck yo I've got to reassess everything' because it's like I've built up a lie I mean it's not a lie, it's coping…" Emma's reflection highlights the significant implications for self-worth that arise from the realisation that one is not rejected or abandoned, but also the need to come to terms with this new information *narratively*.

A number of participants' birth mothers reported not wanting to give them up, citing coercion by their parents. Natasha found material in the DSW file that indicated her mother's uncertainty about relinquishing her, but also the lack of alternative options available:

> There was also some writing in the file about the social worker's perspective of what was happening…Oh it was nasty and judgemental and mean, and judging my birth mother about her actions and everything she did or didn't do or was expected to have done…it was just process and procedural and, and no sort of care, attention in any way for either of us…it felt like it was just tick the box, next place for baby, and it was really quite pushing towards her giving me up. So it wasn't sort of a communication around options or ways of doing things. Pre Domestic Purposes Benefit[92] as well, so there wasn't a lot of options.

[92] The Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) was introduced in 1973 in Aotearoa New Zealand. As a form of state assistance for single parents, this enabled more women to raise their children on their own. Some attributed the decline in babies available for adoption to its introduction, but the numbers of ex-nuptial children being adopted had been in decline since 1962 (Else 1991, 159).

Rick was able to determine that his mother had made a concerted effort to retain him before realising that it was not economically viable. Participants recognised that the social context of the time, which heavily discouraged and stigmatised sole parenthood, meant that the odds were stacked against their birth mothers arguing successfully to keep them. For Natasha, knowing the circumstances of her mother's decision was all she needed to know, anything more was superfluous. Rachel commented that she had come to the understanding that her birth mother "did these things for her own reasons", implying an acceptance of the adoption decision.

Where participants established that their birth parents did not necessarily wish to keep them, certain circumstances surrounding their birth 'softened' any potential blow. In Lisa's situation, her mother being only 15 years old, her father's absence, and the social norms of the time, in combination, rendered the decision to adopt her out understandable. Lisa appeared less concerned with establishing whether her mother wished to keep her, which is reflected in her comments about the origin story provided by her adoptive parents to her adopted brother: "…my dad had a not as good a story for my brother, so my mum was too young, my brother's mum just didn't want him, which is a bit clumsy." Although Lisa recognised that her adoptive brother's story was less favourable, her use of the word "clumsy" is directed less at the story, and more to the blunt way that it was constructed and communicated. Being told you are not wanted is not a good story, compared to a story that might paint adoption as inevitable.

Growing up within a two-parent biological family emerged as having been a possibility for Sonya and Dean, whose Māori birth fathers had offered to marry their birth mothers so that they could keep and raise their children. Although this sentiment was appreciated, neither Sonya nor Dean dwelt on how their lives might have been different if that had been the case. Also in relation to their birth fathers' families, Shane and Donna-Marie pondered why the option of whāngai was not considered, given its continuing practice within their whānau. The answer lay in the opposition by their maternal grandparents, as Donna-Marie explains:

> She said 'you know we asked for you darling, but there was just no way.' She couldn't fight, it would have been pointless and she was frightened to fight because she thought her son would end up in jail for statutory rape, even though they were both under age…like my nana said to me, if they had given that, she would have given me to her youngest brother and his wife because they had kids of that same age… that was the thinking that they had had as a family. (Donna-Marie)

Mere was very upset to know that despite being Māori, her mother did not opt for whāngai. After meeting her mother, Mere attributed her mother's decision to her being disconnected from the Māori world (an observation that would have bearings on 'Misfortune versus Fortune' deliberations, 183-5). Only Paul did not appear to grapple with the "desire versus rejection" question. This is consistent with him not having sought background information about his birth or his adoption. He had, however, invested quite a bit of thinking in what his birth mother's experience of pregnancy and birth may have been like:

> Like I picture my birth mother sometimes in this old brick building with matrons wearing hats and nuns and church people who took the baby or tricked her into just having a shower and then grabbed her or pretended it was over there and then it was long gone and I wonder whether [my adoptive parents] ever put much thought into that or whether that was just how it was so therefore it was okay. I don't know, these are just pictures in my mind where I think, I wonder how…and maybe I should I ask?

In the absence of information from his birth and adoptive parents, Paul developed his own internal dialogue or narrative around how his adoption might have transpired. Paul imagines the scenario centres on his birth mother having had no choice, and his adoptive parents being unwittingly complicit in this coercion. Modell (1992, 91; Klevan 2013, 45, 48) discusses this particular type of framing as a way of adhering to culturally dominant scripts of blood and birth as the basis of parental love and attachment, while explaining the apparent paradox of relinquishment. Furthermore, this keeps the integrity of the birth mother intact, and builds a counter-narrative to that of rejection.

The culturally dominant script of parental love and attachment mattered to Donna-Marie in a slightly different way – she wanted to know that she was born out of love. Finding out that her birthparents were both 14 years of age when she was conceived was extremely distressing because it (temporarily) undermined that narrative:

> They were both 14, and it just made such a big difference, like I was an accident of two people who didn't even know what they were doing and a life had been created as an accident and that was me…So that made my life feel very precarious and it was probably from that moment on, that seeing that information for real kind of made it all the more real and all a bit more problematic. I started I suppose myself to experience some of the shame…it was also obvious why I was adopted, she was too young.

Once Donna-Marie had the opportunity to hear her birth mother and birth whānau accounts, the romantic narrative was restored: **"**And so I got the story from her about my birth and that was she was madly in love with him, it wasn't some meaningless act, he was the love of her life and she was one of the people that helped care for him when he was dying. So it was wonderful hearing all these stories because I was made out of a very joyful and meaningful and lifelong connection between my birth parents and um, I matter."

As Donna-Marie iterates at the end of this quote, knowing that she was the product of a loving connection gave her the sense that she mattered. Kranstuber Horstman (2013, 60) understands this effect as a function of the canonical status of courtship stories, where those that "mirror master narratives about fairytale romances, 'traditional' courtships, and happy endings" will be more socially acceptable. Where Donna-Marie's parents' courtship was not 'traditional' owing to their very young age, nor the ending happy in a traditional sense, a passionate, fairytale romance brought Donna-Marie's origin story somewhat into alignment with a more acceptable courtship narrative. Moreover, more positively-valanced themes have been found to function more positively in adoptees' identities (Kranstuber Horstman 2013, 61); in Donna-Marie's case the more positive tone of such a "young love" courtship story also imbued it with more positive narrative meaning and salience, and subsequently provided her an increased sense of self-worth.

Misfortune versus fortune

A second key focus in participants' reflections on the unfolding circumstances of their birth and adoption is that of weighing up of the benefits and the drawbacks of being adopted, or 'what have been' in terms of growing up within their birth family. It is interesting to note that the loss/gain calculations made by participants about their relinquishment and adoption reflect the predominant entrance narrative of rescue. Better life opportunities/chances were emphasised by four participants as being the principal gain. Conversely, not growing up in a dysfunctional or unstable (birth family) environment was noted by four participants.

Despite acknowledging this benefit in his own situation, Shane was critical of what he perceived as the "fairytale" perpetuated by adoptive parents in their entrance narratives, contrasting this with what he does or does not communicate to his own biological children: "…there's this whole notion of being better off, and sometimes your parents can give that message too, there's this kind of little fairytale going on about 'oh your mother would have been dragging you round from pillar to post, you are better off', and you sort of are almost made to feel that you should be bloody grateful, and it's like, I don't tell my kids they should be grateful, that's what I do for my kids, they don't have to say

thank-you…" Here Shane objects to assumptions that remaining with a birth mother would only be negative, and the associated 'grateful' discourse that is reserved for adopted but not biological children.

The primary loss associated with being adopted that (seven) participants deliberated upon was that of growing up without whakapapa and te reo Māori (Chapter Eight, 128-39). However, upon meeting their birth whānau, four participants recognised that this would not have been a given, on the basis of their whānau's limited connection with te ao Māori or use of te reo. Therefore, what was anticipated as a loss, was reconsidered. In Natasha's case, she enjoyed the benefit of her adoptive paternal grandmother's teaching of whakapapa, and so on balance, she saw her relinquishment and adoption in a neutral light: "Yeah just little things that [my birth mother] said, I just sat back and I didn't think I gained anything or lost anything. And it was nice, it was okay."

Compared to the focus on resolving "desire versus rejection", the "misfortune versus misfortune" tension featured less in participants' narratives. Four participants (Rua, Emma, Sonya, Paul) felt it was not helpful to mull over what might have been, that this is an ultimately non-constructive or futile exercise. Perhaps reflecting this ambivalence, Jenny and Paul compared their adoption to a worst case scenario that did not involve remaining with their birth mothers – abortion and foster/institutional care. Such comparisons are a strong statement against the perceived negativity of adoption.

Consideration of the impact of adoption on who they are as people was pondered by a couple of participants. Paul responded angrily to the suggestions of others that he would be the inverse of who he is, if he had remained with his birth whānau, or the implication that he has been only been successful due to the influence of his Pākehā adoptive parents:

> I got the first general seat…for a Māori male and people often say to me 'that's incredible'. But then my mates go 'that's because you were brought up by whiteys and you know the white world' and I joke but…probably the way that I think is that I know how to move effectively in both worlds…I do get pressed on things like 'oh do you think you were saved, would life have been any different? You know here you are as a member of parliament…'…someone I think flippantly said to me once 'oh if you're stayed with your Māori whānau would you have been head of the Black Power or something?' I went 'ah that's not even funny but these are the assumptions that you've made'. Like 'do you think that they gave you something that you may not have had?' and I said 'I will never ever know'. But I'm not going to retrace it and try and find excuses or rationale.

In a narrative act of resolution following her interview, Mere spoke of the abusive situation in her adoptive family in terms of fate/destiny and redemption – "this is how things had to be for me, that was my path, and I had to go through it to bring me to this [very positive] point". Rick arrived at a similar conclusion with regards to his adoption – if it was not for his adoption, he would not have suffered the abuse that he did, but if he was not adopted, he would not have had some of the benefits either, namely a Pākehā surname and "two working white parents", which he surmises might have safeguarded against racism: "So strange. It's a bit of a double edged sword, without it I wouldn't have gone down that path but also with it I wouldn't have gone down that path. You know, how would I have?"

Although Paul and Mere did not want to entertain thoughts of unrealised selves or "phantom lives" (Honig 2005, 215), Donna-Marie wondered aloud about this very thing, related to discovering her birth name: "I've got a whole other name. Like again this sort of thing, there's this whole alternative life you could have had, and that was a big deal." Similarly, Sonya speculated that there were multiple possibilities for the kind of person she may have become, depending on life experiences: "And I think even if I had spent time with my Māori family, I don't think I would be the same person that I am now". Given the disconnection of some of her birth whānau from the Māori world, Sonya did not think that her possible "birth self" would necessarily have a stronger sense of Māoriness, compared to her *actual* self.

Meeting birth family enabled participants to weigh up what they might have missed out on due to being adopted, against the benefits. This appears to have been an important part of coming to terms with being-adopted, if not as common as deliberations about desire versus rejection. On balance, most participants concluded either they did not lose more than they had gained, or that dwelling on the hypothetical was fruitless. This did not entail an uncritical acceptance of the dominant narratives of rescue however, but a philosophical and pragmatic position that granted them some narrative closure.

Narrating connection – the uncanny

The narrative work involved in constructing an origin story for the most part seeks to account for adoptees' *disconnection* from their birth families. However, an interesting feature that emerged in analysis was that of the narration of enduring connection with birth families, through synchronicity – the attribution of meaning to random happenings or seemingly unrelated events (Russo-Netzer and Icekson 2020, 1). Six participants recounted uncanny coincidences as part of their search narratives. Instances of unknowing proximity to birth family were recounted by Rick, Natasha, Emma and Shane. Each mentioned discovering they had lived or were living in the same suburb or small town as their

birth families at one point in time. This prompted participants to speculate that their paths may have crossed, without their awareness:

> It's just me and mum, living literally a block away from my birth family, didn't realise it, went to [primary school] with my cousins. (Emma)

> And in actual fact I'd lived probably 500 metres from [my birth mother] at one point because she'd been in that same house for many years, and as a young adult you shift around…And that was freaky, it was like 'oh man, we've probably gone past each other at some point in time'… (Natasha)

Another type of coincidence involved place, Natasha and Shane talked about their feelings attached to locations that they were to later discover they had whakapapa links to. Shane had stayed at a whare named after one of his ancestors, in an area that he later found was rich in whakapapa connections, and Natasha happened to purchase land in one of her ancestral areas, far removed from where she had been brought up.

> …and that's quite uncanny when I think back on it, what was that about, you know? That's kind of slightly spooky in a way, but yeah I wish I'd known… (Shane)

Participants' accounts of these coincidences are wistful; Shane wishes he had known, implying that this knowledge would have made a significant difference to him at that time. There is a sense of birth family being so close but yet far away, simultaneously within, and out of, reach due to both parties' lack of knowledge. Birth families are thereby present in spite of their absence in the adoptee's life, "there-but-not-there" (Tonkin 2012, 14). In the latter examples, whakapapa, even unknown, draws adoptees to places or entails a particular "feeling" or "knowing" of "homeness" and comfort.

Several participants noted the coincidence of meeting someone in the course of their everyday activities, who was acquainted with their birth families and was able to facilitate contact. For Rick, there was a chance meeting of a friend of his birth father's while hitch-hiking to meet him, Natasha happened to meet a cousin of her birth father's at a *hui* (meeting, gathering), and Sonya met a friend of a friend who was able to put her in touch with her birth father's whānau.

Rachel spoke about her experience in the following way: "I met one of my birth uncles in a kapa haka group and that was just one of those epiphany moments and you know the universe just all worked out and that's how we connected. And then he just introduced me to birth family and all that

kind of thing. It was spinny man, it was crazy...it was someone looking after me, it was just one thing after another." Here Rachel suggests that her meeting with her uncle was a result of other cosmic or divine forces. Rick thinks of this as wairua at work, and such coincidences as an indication of wairua putting you on the right path: "…when you let go and pursue something more spiritual or more into the wairua of it, the wairua, it will find you. You'll go with it". The sense of other forces at work suggests that birth family members are destined or meant to meet, and affirms that search is the right course of action.

Less commonly cited coincidences involved connections between adoptive and birth families. Intriguingly, Kere's adoptive mother was told by DSW that she looked like Kere's birth mother, and given their residence in the same area, was told to stay home for several days lest they encounter each other. This was relayed to Kere as part of his adoption entrance narrative, and he was able to verify the resemblance later: "so uncanny when you see them, you think 'holy shit, you guys could be sisters.'" Kere recounted a second coincidence when he made contact with his birth mother – it transpired that her husband had worked with Kere's adopted brother for some time, a fact that Kere found disconcerting. Unusually, Rick uncovered a common ancestral connection between his adoptive family and his iwi whakapapa; two brothers originally from Scotland had settled in the North and South Islands respectively, and Rick was adopted to descendants of the South Island ancestor, while descendants of the North Island ancestor were buried in his tribal urupā.

Many of these coincidences might be very easily accounted for by the small population and land mass of Aotearoa New Zealand, making it more likely that adoptees, adoptive families and birth family members may find themselves in the same locations, or with acquaintances in common. However, their meaning to participants is of greater interest here. In contrast to themes of fate and destiny narrated by adoptive parents in adoption entrance narratives, these uncanny coincidences invoke the same themes, narrated and utilised by adoptees. Imbuing "trivial chance incidents" with meaning is part of adoptees reclaiming the adoption narrative, constructing an alternative to that that they grew up with (Stiffler 1993, 273; Seligmann 2013, 178). Where adoption entrance narratives gave participants a legitimate place within their adoptive families, the narrative integration of synchronicities confirms their bond with and connection to their birth families and whakapapa, in spite of their separation. Synchronicity thus has a meaningful and unifying power in adoptee narratives (Stiffler 1993, 282).

Creating a coherent origin story was an important aspect of most participants' search and reunion journeys in spite of the fact that many recognised the futility of pursuing a singular 'truth'. Being able to account for oneself and one's past is a critical requirement of modern self-reflexivity (Giddens 1991, 5); adoptees achieved this pre- and post-reunion by drawing on official records and/or

birth parents or family members' accounts. Narrative construction and reconstruction also enabled participants to come to terms with their adoption and relinquishment somewhat and generate new meanings of 'being-adopted.' As Māori adoptees however, an origin story was not entirely sufficient – there was also the need for another type of "story", that of their whakapapa.

Learning about whakapapa

As noted earlier, knowing (or suspecting, as in the cases of Lisa and Daniel) that they possessed whakapapa gave increased impetus to participants' search for birth whānau. Participants knew, as per prevailing legal definitions, that Māori descent is the primary criterion for being classified or identified as Māori; this definition is more akin to traditional conceptions of whakapapa than blood quantum. For those who had been told they had a Māori birth parent or parents, contact with birth whānau would not necessarily have been required to meet the legal definition. However, as was revealed in some situations, information supplied was not always accurate, failing to mention Māori ethnicity of birth parents. Furthermore, participants recognised the extension of whakapapa beyond a legal definition, and the importance of whānau validation in that regard.

For Lisa, her Māori whakapapa was confirmed only upon meeting her birth father at age 30. Her adoptive parents were not informed of this fact, which generated some awkwardness around Lisa's interest in things Māori:

> …they had vocally denied all my life, 'we know that you're not Māori' every time that I showed interest in Māori stuff, and that was the end of it. I really felt like I was coming out to my parents as Māori, it was really strategic…I had to think about how to word it and I knew that would be challenging for them, and it totally was. I felt that mum was really defensive and didn't consider that it was probably a more important revelation for me than it was for her, or that her reaction might be important to me…and they're coming to terms with the fact that I'm interested in things that are Māori and that part of that is that I am Māori.

The social worker's report from the time stated that Lisa's father had dark hair, appears European and "tans very well." While Lisa read this as "not white" some years later, it had not occurred to her adoptive mother that Lisa's father was Māori – she maintained that race or ethnicity "wasn't something [people] noticed then." Although having her whakapapa confirmed was very important for Lisa, she also expressed some caution about not over-extending its bearing on her identity: "…I'm realistic about who I am, I haven't suddenly become someone different because I know a bit more of my

whakapapa." This is a nod to the continuity of her self and personal identity, irrespective of new self-knowledge.

Similarly to Lisa, Dean was able to confirm his whakapapa Māori upon meeting his birth father. This information had the effect of opening up the Māori world to him, giving Dean the confidence to make those connections or "associations": "To me it's probably just actually knowing that I am Māori…it's just a sense, just knowing that, I think that puts my mind at ease sort of thing, like you do know where you come from whereas before I wasn't sure. But yeah it's just being able to associate…we haven't got a family tree, we've got a family forest, and it's just so widespread."

Although Emma had grown up knowing that she was Māori, she did not claim this as an identity until she had met her whānau and learned her whakapapa: "Before [age] 30 I *was not* Māori, I didn't identify as Māori, I didn't learn to speak Māori, I didn't go to Māori things, in fact I shied away from them primarily because the only Māoris I ever came into contact with were those stereotypical, you know, and I was surrounded with a whole lot of white people…" Emma's stance differs from a number of other participants in their insistence of a primordial sense of being-Māori. Her position is a strong assertion that being-Māori depends upon being connected to the Māori world and people.

Despite whakapapa and blood quantum being paradigmatically divergent, for several participants, learning about whakapapa verified their blood quantum. The array of racialised discourses around blood account for Shane's desire to authenticate his fraction as well as Mere's disdain for and desire to be more than a "half-caste":

> …but they got this A4 bit of paper with eye colour, height, occupation and a couple of little things but it was essentially just a couple of paragraphs of scant detail, it mentioned that my birth father, you know the old blood quantum thing, they called him a quarter Māori, if you're gonna be technical about it, he was actually just over half Māori, I just did a DNA test recently and it came up 28% which is pretty much bang on what I was expecting, what I know of whakapapa. (Shane)

Shane also asked his birth father directly: "It was virtually the first question straight out of the blocks that I asked him…and when he said 'my mother was full Māori' and I was like ok, bang, and then that just took it up a notch really because it moved that whole thing just that bit closer." The discovery that Shane's paternal grandmother was a "full-blooded" Māori meant that Shane was 'more Māori' than he was initially told, therefore raising his claim to Māoriness, and bringing him closer to the source of Māori authenticity. Mere voices a similar view about the significance of having a larger quantum of Māori 'blood':

> I used to always think I was half Māori but I know that my father was probably a full Māori, and that my mother was at least a half, so there's a lot of Māori in me…It was important, I wanted to know, I didn't want to be half caste, if I was going to be Māori, then I'd like to be Māori, and so even though you can have all the Pākehā mannerisms, they'll look at you and they'll still expect this and that out of you, and so that was probably why I needed to know, so I could try and get on top of some of it, having not been able to get on top of any of it (laughing)…

Although Mere recognised that quantum does not matter per se for claiming Māori descent and ethnicity, she needed to know that she was more than half-caste, to affirm that she was 'sufficiently' Māori. This concern aligns with the definition of Māori enshrined in the Māori Affairs Act 1953, where a Māori was determined as being an individual who was between half-caste and full-blooded Māori (but no less).

Without known whakapapa, Jenny validated her Māori ethnicity and blood quantum via a DNA test, the results of which have subsequently changed how she identifies as Māori:

> They were told by the nurse that the father was half Māori so obviously the birth mother had told the nurses something, but it looks like he was a lot more than that because I've done a DNA test and it says I'm half Māori. So as far as my mum and dad knew they were adopting a quarter-caste Māori as you used to say back in the day…now I just say 'I'm Māori'…"

Participants' narratives in this section illuminate the contingence of Māori identification on 'proof' of some shape or form. Being acknowledged as the child of a Māori mother or father was critical. Others sought affirmation of their 'fraction', simultaneously invoking and experiencing emancipation from racialised discourses. Having satisfied these baseline markers of Māoriness, a number of participants proceeded to explore their being-Māori in an expanded sense, by virtue of tribal whakapapa.

Iwi affiliations

After being able to verify their Māori whakapapa, the next most significant discovery for participants was that of iwi or tribal affiliation. This information was not collected or recorded by DSW. Learning about his whakapapa Māori enabled Paul to fill some significant gaps (origins, *pepeha* (tribal saying)) that had made his participation in the Māori world somewhat difficult: "…it's great to know where you're from, where your marae is, your river, just the basics and then to patch things up as you go, patchwork the quilt together on who your whānau is and isn't, how they fit in."

Shane learned about his *Ngāti Porou*[93] affiliations from his father, in what was a poignant moment: "…that moment when he said 'Ngāti Porou', that was like a physical sensation, of just like this big weight, a big cloak almost, being placed on my shoulders, like all that ancestry was given back to me at that point, and I felt 'yeah, I've got it', and the only experience I can compare it to is the birth of my children, particularly my son, it was just this very visceral kind of thing, and I got it back."

Paul and Shane both use metaphors to describe what learning their whakapapa did for them. Paul uses the word patch in two different ways – as filling gaps or 'tidying up', but also joining disparate elements together to form a whole, and furthermore, to provide covering, warmth and comfort. In contrast, Paul had reported feeling "naked" and exposed without knowledge of whakapapa. Shane's use of the word cloak similarly implies protection and shelter, but has additional Māori-specific meaning. *Korowai* (finely woven flax cloaks) symbolise mana, status and power, connecting the wearer to the whakapapa of the materials from which they are woven, as well as Māori values and ancestral knowledge and practices (McAulay and Te Waru-Rewiri 1996, 199). Furthermore, Shane's emphasis on the physical sensation of feeling the cloak upon him as his whakapapa was "given back", makes whakapapa a tangible, real and substantiating property.

Rick spoke at length about what it meant to him to learn of his *Ngāti Tūwharetoa*[94] whakapapa. Knowledge of his iwi and an acquaintance with his *maunga* (mountain) gave him an ancestral belonging that he draws on to compensate somewhat for what was not forthcoming from his birth parents:

> ...everyone needs to know if they have a place to stand and ownership in the world. They belong to be here and the biological connection is what grounds them to the earth, and if you don't have that, you're never actually grounded and what I never had, see they could push me round from pillar to post in the past because I didn't know. But now I've got those mountains at my back, I know I'm Tūwharetoa. I know Tongariro's my maunga, Tauponui-a-tia's my lake, I know who is my chief and you're not ever going to take that away from me. That gave me the sense of belonging…There's a sense of comfort in that where I don't have to fight… I know there's no hole.

Whakapapa as more than genealogical citation is evident in Rick's narrative. In order to understand and really know or feel his whakapapa, Rick had travelled to his ancestral land to see the maunga, and

[93] Ngāti Porou – the tribal grouping of the upper East Coast/East Cape of the North Island.
[94] Ngāti Tūwharetoa – the people or tribal grouping of the Lake Taupō area.

where his ancestors are buried. He thereafter had a picture in his mind that he could draw on to invoke that sense of belonging. Furthermore, beyond learning the names of ancestors and family members, Rick had learned their *stories*, imbuing his whakapapa with a living quality. Rua, Natasha, Donna-Marie and Shane echoed the importance of knowing more about the tūpuna behind the whakapapa. The majority of participants had physically journeyed to and set foot on the land of their ancestors, recognising the "phenomenology of place" that characterises whakapapa in contrast to western conceptions of genealogy (DeLoughrey 2007, 165). Kere articulated this as going beyond the learned connection of a pepeha, to the experienced or *felt connection* of returning to tūrangawaewae.

In a different way of connecting to tūpuna and whenua, Emma conceived of her whakapapa connection as being to *te ao tūroa* (the natural world) in general:

> …I feel connected to this tree, and this plant, I really like the slaters on the ground, so my connection to my world, I made my connection, and I think that's what Māori is, to make a relationship with your environment, and you belong to that. I feel a deeper sense of connection to nature than I do to Māoridom, but through Māoridom I can trace back into nature…That connection to the natural world is my connection not only to Māoridom, but my connection to humanity.

Rick spoke in a similar way of a grounded but spiritual mode of connection enabled by whakapapa. For Rick, his indigeneity provides the opportunity to transcend the minutiae of human binaries and categorisations, including biological and social distinctions, to be whole, both adopted beginnings and biological origins:

> I am of the indigenous culture, I'm of *Hawaiki* (ancient homeland of the Māori people), it tracks me all the way back to the origin. The origin and the physical, the origin of the body…but it's also…that whole spiritual essence that's ongoing, it's omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, all those things…That's what being Māori is to me…it gives you ultimate belonging, no one can uproot that, they can try and chop it, you can't take it...Can we go beyond a physical level and a psychological level and say that this is how I was brought up but I believe I'm more than that, and I am that as well? But when I reside in that place I'm a bit like the pinball even when we're describing it you're between the two. Why am I a separate entity? If I believe in the wholeness, about the oneness of creativity then I'll actually have to raise myself above that.

Although Kere does not know his whakapapa, he has found other ways to express his connection to whenua – through carving and art/sculpture:

> I think it's positive to know that you've got a link to the land. I find in myself, see I'm this White businessman but I'm a carver and I'm an artist and then people say 'oh I never saw that in you'. And I was thinking because that's actually my link to the land. I don't want to say it's my Māori side but that's because I'm looking here and I'm thinking man I can just see that and I'm part of it you know. And that's Māori to me.

In their narratives Rick, Emma and Kere emphasise being-Māori as being-in-the-natural-world, embedded within the landscape and ecology (Sissons 2005, 39). There is a deliberateness in Emma and Kere's forging of this connection, and for Rick, this connection was invoked by his discovery of his tribal whakapapa. Both Emma and Rick speak of the ontological security that this "naturalistic spirituality" (Watt and Kowal 2019, 64) affords them – the feeling of security produced by their indigenous belonging to the earth, "the sense of biographical continuity and wholeness supported in and through their relations with natural others" (Innes 2017, 381; Kinvall and Svensson 2017, 336).

There are two ways of perceiving this narrative extension of Māori primordiality: firstly, as colonial in origin and a naïve perpetuation of primitivism and essentialism (in the guise of eco-indigeneity: Sissons 2005, 39; Guenther 2006, 17-18); or secondly, as a declaration of the ontological relationship to land that underpins indigenous identities and worldviews (Greaves 2018, 107). Bell (2004, 138) posits that the distinguishing factor is positive indigenous agency; thus, as an agentic expression by Emma and Rick, this narrative is less internalised colonialism, and more conscious articulation of autonomous indigenous difference. This whakapapa-whenua narrative is more than a political statement however. The deeply felt (re)instatement of connection that is simultaneously embodied and spiritual is akin to the concept of "blood memory". In her research of mixed-blood urban Native peoples in Toronto, Lawrence (2004, 199) found that adoptees in particular tended to think of their Nativeness as "in the blood", not able to be erased. It makes sense that this would be particularly appealing to adoptees, given their removal from birth families and communities, and the resultant feelings of loss. Furthermore, blood memory does not require justification in terms of degree or extent of ancestry, it addresses condemnatory insinuations of 'choice' and social construction in terms of identification, and promises indigenous survival – "our bodies tell us who we are" and provide "a direct link to the lives of our ancestors" (Lawrence 2004, 200).

In contrast, a 'circumstantialist' conceptualisation which equates indigeneity with "living Native", offers much less scope for Pākehā-raised adoptees to claim an indigenous identity (Watt and

Kowal 2019, 72). This may explain Rick, Kere, Shane and Emma's lack of interest in claiming a pan-Māori[95] ethnic identity – the emphasis on cultural and ethnic socialisation is exclusionary, and conversely, self-identification on the basis of affiliation (at least as defined in the NZ Census) is undiscerning with regards to Māori descent. Furthermore, the socially assigned component of Māori ethnicity entails acceptance by others, who have tended to be unsympathetic to the unique circumstances of Māori adoptees.

Each of the participants who espoused this whakapapa-whenua narrative shared ongoing experiences of identity contestation; in Rick and Emma's cases, largely to do with their having been raised by and as Pākehā. Emma shared a very recent experience of being compelled to resign from a Māori leadership position, because of challenges to her authenticity by other Māori: "…I got so much shit because they perceived me to be white. Instead of supporting and nurturing, I felt very much attacked, so I decided to remove myself from that situation." This experience left Emma with the following feelings about the Māori world:

> When I think of te ao Māori I think of a *pā* (fortified village). So I'll think of the very centre of the pā as like the *whare wānanga*, a place where people can go and share concepts and thoughts and ideas, and to me that is the heart of te ao Māori, and it doesn't mean that you have to be Māori to be in there, you could be any flavour to be in there as long as you're contributing to the future benefit of te ao Māori. Outside the pā, where the palisades are and the trenches are…the low brow niggers use their low brow intellect to try and keep people out, or keep people in…Their words cut… I wasn't raised by Māori parents, so I don't have tikanga, I don't know how to do kapa haka, I don't know protocol on marae, maybe my hair isn't curly, maybe my skin is too light, my clothes are too trendy, you know? Like just keep listing…you realise… actually statements like that are the most un-Māori statements to make…

Here Emma delineates between what te ao Māori could be in terms of inclusivity, and what it is sometimes for people such as herself, policed by those who would enforce a particularly narrow conception of being-Māori.

In a search for a security of being that is undeniable and indisputable, ethnicity as a creation of culture, deniable and contestable, is insufficient. A primordial and naturalised belonging to land based

[95] 'Pan-Māori': relating to, representing, or involving all Māori people. A pan-Māori identity is a generic Māori ethnic identity, rather than a tribal identification (Statistics New Zealand 2016, 10 provides a brief discussion of the distinction).

on whakapapa on the other hand, feels right, aligns with understandings of what it means to be authentically indigenous, and offers some respite from the judgements of human actors.

Participants recognised the value of time in deepening knowledge of whakapapa; Sonya had "made it [her] life to find out" about it, and according to Donna-Marie, "you're always developing your knowledge of whakapapa, and the things that you were told ages ago start to make more sense because you understand all the different connections." Compared with knowledge of whakapapa in the abstract, Donna-Marie perceived that cultural connections with other Māori are what make whakapapa meaningful, and that there is a deeper cultural connection only possible *through* whakapapa and whānau.

However, as with Emma's example cited above, there were also key constraints that participants experienced as they began to navigate the Māori world with their new-found genealogical knowledge. Donna-Marie came up against the limits of the law in terms of being able to ensure that she was included alongside siblings in Māori Land Court records, not to obtain land, but for recognition and inclusion: "That's what matters to me, but not property from parents because I actually have other parents…So unless I can get my name on these land records, because they become a record of whakapapa into the future…I have never existed."[96]

Sonya was frustrated at being challenged when she attempted to register with her adoptive mother's iwi, given that this is not her "blood" whakapapa: "but now because I think of Treaty settlement and registering on rolls and those kinds of things, we've become I think a little bit elitist and exclusive." This being "quite hung up on [the biological linkages]" seemed particularly ironic to her given that "Māori were prolific adopters of other people's children". Shane reported that "it doesn't matter how hard you try, you can never get [what you lost] back." In terms of te reo Māori, cultural socialisation and time spent with whānau, knowing birth family and whakapapa was only the first step, and was not a guarantee of being 'comfortable'. Thus, several participants found that whakapapa was not necessarily able to resolve the differences, dislocations and ruptures produced by adoption, and whakapapa itself was found to be subject to rules regarding eligibility and inclusion.

As in other societies and cultures, in the Māori world the social practice of genealogy "[enforces] normative constructions of legitimate families and identities" (Patton-Imani 2018, 17 of 19). Despite being more holistic and expansive in its conception of family, Māori society is similarly bionormative. Thus, although participants possessed the biological linkages that render them part of a whakapapa, they were "biological strangers", lacking the critical relationships that give whakapapa its

[96] With regards to the law, an adopted child becomes the 'as if biological' child of her adoptive parents, at that point ceasing to be the child of her biological parents. Under Pākehā law, this may preclude an adoptee from being recognised as part of her birth whānau in official or legal documentation.

full-rounded quality. The gap now was no longer genealogical as such, but that of kinship. Kinship relationships are what Donna-Marie considered give whakapapa its ultimate meaning, but these take time and work to (re)establish.

In this vein, Shane and Rick's narratives illustrate polar opposite ways of approaching kinship as part of relating and identifying via whakapapa, based on what felt comfortable or right. Whakapapa to his immediate and extended birth whānau felt more meaningful to Shane than an abstract or "some big grand thing": "I try and stick pretty close to home on that one…I'm Ngāti Porou, that's my grandmother. My identity comes from individual people, it's not something that's sort of up there, abstraction, I mean it was growing up because I didn't have any to connect it to." Shane makes an interesting observation here; that being-Māori becomes less abstract and more concrete through "becoming bio-genealogical." He sees a risk in extending whakapapa too far, and feels it makes sense in a more limited scope; it is inarguable and less open to contestation. Given the collective orientation of Māori society, and the emphasis on interdependence and strength *through* relationships, to identify as Māori *is* to come from whānau.

In contrast, Rick didn't find "home" with his immediate birth whānau, choosing instead to connect through more distant whakapapa and particularly landscape. In his narrative Rick invoked the Māori concept of tūrangawaewae,[97] a place to stand, to describe the strength he gained from knowing his whakapapa – a more stable, inalienable, grounded and fundamental belonging. He goes on to explain: "I don't see my roots as only going back to either family but as a much broader network that has been in motion for thousands of years prior and that the persons who gave me life and looked after the child are only there for a brief transition in time." Thus, Rick's experience of adoption has fundamentally influenced his view of family/whānau, leading him to adopt a much broader perspective.

Both ways of connecting and identifying are legitimate or *authentic* in Māori terms, and draw on whakapapa as a source of identity. The resulting identities – family identity and indigenous identity – are both 'naturally' anchored. However, Rick and Shane made different choices relating to kinship. For Shane, aligning and embedding himself within the whānau unit made more sense and avoided the problematic pan-Māori affiliation. Rick also chose to avoid the problematic pan-Māori affiliation, and some tenuous whānau relationships, by anchoring himself to whenua: "So when you have that, that gives me a greater sense than anything, so that's where the biology comes in but that's as far as it

[97] Royal (2007a) describes tūrangawaewae as the inner sense of security and foundation provided by one's relationship to the land. Connections to mountains (maunga), rivers (awa) and waterways (e.g. lakes) recited in pepeha (tribal sayings) express this internal sense of foundation.

should go." Here, Rick speaks to the power and products of biological connection, but its limits in terms of ethnic primordialism.

The work of whakapapa

Adoption disrupts three of the four senses of identity related to genealogy (Hatton 2019, 7, 8 of 16) – sameness or continuity of identity across records, personal identity and social identity. The birth identity of the adoptee is extinguished in the course of adoption, with a new adopted identity created and maintained across official records. As Donna-Marie noted, this potentially prohibits the inclusion of the adoptee in the documentation of whakapapa, where legally the adoptee is no longer the child of their biological parents.

In terms of personal identity, as noted by all participants, their adoption and the absence of information about their birth origins hampered their attainment of satisfactory self-understanding. Searching for and learning one's family history, and whakapapa entailing knowledge of ancestors, was a critical means of retrieving or achieving this self-understanding.

Belonging to a family history and grouping constitutes one kind of social identity. Inherited traits and family stories are ways in which dialogue and belonging are created and transmitted between generations (Hatton 2019, 8 of 19), and these were both sought by participants in their search for birth family. However, where bio-genealogical information pertaining to participants' Pākehā family would only be required to satisfy personal and this more limited family identity[98], much more was demanded of whakapapa. With Māori social identity spanning whānau, hapū, iwi and pan-Māori groupings (encompassing indigenous and ethnic identification), kinship and belonging was much more difficult and expansive to negotiate/navigate.

The ability to connect with ancestry spanning hundreds or thousands of years is now possible via DNA tests, and so is within the scope of the adoptee who is willing to submit a biological sample for testing. While the deep ancestry does not identify individual ancestors, it can "imaginatively help someone construct a group with which to identify, and in this sense it relates to social identity" (Hatton 2019, 8 of 19). Based on participants' accounts, it would seem that these reports of one's ethnic, tribal and racial genetic make-up will not wholly satisfy the identity and kinship needs of adoptees, purportedly delivered by whakapapa. It may constitute an alternative means of identifying birth family members however (as is Jenny's hope), and enabling some verification that will enable social identification.

[98] Participants' socialisation in the Pākehā world and the unnamed, unidentified qualities of Pākehā identity (a transparent universal European subject: DeLoughrey 2007, xi) meant that participants could much more easily satisfy the demands of Pākehā social identity.

In common with other bio-genealogical knowledge, knowledge of whakapapa is "constitutive in its consequences." When individuals acquire new information about their ancestry, they "acquire identity by that very discovery…the information forms ("constitutes") what they know about themselves" (Strathern 1999, 68). As a form of bio-genealogical information, whakapapa yielded two "epistemic goods" for participants: a special kind of self-knowledge based on resemblances, and a narrative within which one's actions have meaning (Haslanger 2012, 168 quoting Velleman). Shane spoke about both of these products in the following way: "…that self-awareness, you only get that sometimes just from recognising yourself in others and that's what I mean about those reference points, that map of who you are and likenesses, just that whole thing of whakapapa, it's sometimes just recited just because it's what you do, but there's also that recognition that this is who you are, this is who you're like, and that you can be proud of that."

Self-understanding was a very important aspect of learning about whakapapa for participants, not only for personal identity, but also social identity. Whakapapa encompasses family resemblances, but is also broader, extending relations beyond the immediate family.[99] As "a preeminent trope of Māori cosmology" (Huang 2016, 185), whakapapa is the key narrative trope that individuals draw on to construct their relation to te ao Māori. Resemblances based on whakapapa may thus extend to racial resemblance, enabling others to see the adoptee as Māori through their resemblance to Māori whānau members. As with family resemblances, whakapapa is a relational property, implicating while not guaranteeing kinship or acceptance (Marre and Bestard 2009, 70; Witt 2005, 144). Thus, whakapapa is limited in what it constitutes – it does indeed constitute the Māori individual, but not solely through self- and declared knowledge. Where whakapapa relationships have been disrupted by adoption, whakapapa can only ever be a supplementary rather than substitute narrative; adoption and its discontinuities still needed to be accounted for, most notably in terms of kinship and culture. As a route to roots, search and reunion marked the very beginning rather than the endpoint of bio-genealogical fulfilment.

Search, reunion and identity

In this period of their adoption trajectories, participants embarked on a quest for biological origins. This was a critical juncture – promising the self-understanding and reconnection that many participants longed for, but also a coming to terms with their relinquishment and adoption. Participants were subject

[99] And even further beyond: whakapapa is an ontological construct that connects all things. According to Mikaere (2016, 13): "when I visualise whakapapa, I see it as three-dimensional: as expanding in all directions from an undefined and undefinable point, endlessly complex and infinite, with all parts forever connected to their point of origin and to one another."

to a number of tensions as part of this quest, stemming from the discursive paradoxes of closed adoption. Participants narrated a strain between their drive to know biological origins and obligations of loyalty to adoptive families, as well as a need to rationalise their decision as non-pathological. Whakapapa provided a powerful and inarguable justification, if not reinforcing the narration of search and reunion in essentialist terms, a quest for something fundamental, solid and 'real'.

Does the pursuit of biological belonging mean that adoptees have "[fallen] into the trap of reasserting blood kinship as the most authentic of all kinship arrangements", submitting to a "retrograde discourse"? (Callahan 2011, 23, 21). Do adoptees who search for physical resemblance and their 'real' selves reproduce the adoptive/biological binary rather than challenge it? In doing so are they perpetuating the notion that adoptive ties are of inferior ontological status to biological ties, and adoptive identity as inferior to bio-genealogical identity? From her interviews with adoptees, Modell (1994, 138) concluded that the prevailing view of knowing birth relatives in order to attain a "sense of reality" and self-identity was a variation on, rather than rejection of, [essentialist, biocentric] cultural conventions. Others such as Callahan (2011) and Wills (2016) have articulated this variation as a more nuanced adoptive positioning (paradoxical essentialism) which is able to accommodate both biologically-based and socially constructed identities.

As is apparent in post-contact narrative and nature/nurture conceptualisations in this study, participants did not wholly privilege biology in their lives or identities. Even with adherence to the first part of the dominant search/reunion narrative (i.e. the importance of or need to search, and claims regarding the 'truth' of origins), there was not wholesale acceptance of essentialist rhetoric (de Soto 2004, 194). In particular, claims regarding the 'truth' of identity were viewed with scepticism by some participants, after the fact of contact and reunion.

Participants' narratives demonstrate different ways in which the identity conferred by (knowledge) of bio-genealogy was taken up, in conjunction with the self and identity formed in its absence. This was most pronounced with respect to Māori identity. Considerable work was involved in reconciling a contested Māori social identity with a primordial Māori personal identity, even after whakapapa and whānau were known. This increasingly involved participants' action beyond the spheres of adoptive and birth families, as part of realising their bio-genealogy.

Ki te whaiao, ki te ao mārama.

All that was held in Te Kore, all that has expanded into Te Pō, is but a pinprick of light. It is the seed of potential. It is minute, this particle of light. It is tempting to say insignificant; but because it holds our attention it is significant – we've imbued it with importance.

Watch it as it continues to grow: the heat and light and increase at a rate impossible for us to fathom. To our slow senses it is as if we are witnessing a great explosion. One moment we can hardly see the light, the next we are surrounded by it.

Thus, this tiny speck has become the centre.

…Let us meet here at the centre. The centre of all that is known, all that will be. We will create a world here from a few words, we will make a place where we will be comfortable.

Let us first build a whare where we can share our stories…
from afar, our whare shines in the blank: it is a tiny speck in the great abyss of Te Pō. It carries us all. It is so small in the vastness, so vulnerable. How is it not crushed by the black?
Be comforted by the thought that eventually night arcs into day.

We must continue. Walls. Plain for now, but by the end of our telling they will be carved by words and deeds – life, if you'd call it that, frozen in the moment. Past, present, future simultaneous. As it is, as it should be.

…We pick a place on the continuum. This is where we start.
It is at once a beginning, a middle and an end.

Whiti Hereaka (2019, 23-26)

Chapter Ten:
Emerging – Beyond Adoptive and Birth Families

Adoptees have always been "in-the-world", operating outside of their adoptive and birth families as Māori adoptees, and following reunion, as re-connected bio-genealogical beings. The order in which participants' being, becoming and emergence is discussed suggests a linear, sequential trajectory. However, this is not the case: for instance, some participants had already established their own families prior to meeting their birth families (Jenny, Daniel, Mere, Dean), and most participants had engaged in the Māori world prior to and in parallel with meeting their birth families and learning their whakapapa. This chapter presents participants' experiences consequent to contact with birth family, where it was possible to draw this distinction. In emerging and middle adulthood, participants are in the process of establishing themselves and laying down the foundations for their being-Māori in the world. These endeavours extend beyond adoptive and birth families, to the knowledge and support of peers and mentors, and becoming parents or establishing their own family units.

Adoptees in relationship

Although a currently under-researched area, literature pertaining to adult adoptees suggests that for some, the significance of being adopted extends beyond childhood, to intimate relationships (Field and Pond 2018, 24). This general finding was confirmed in participants' narratives, despite this constituting only a limited focus in the interview schedule.

Pathologised adoptees

The pathological adoptee is a significant feature of the adoption literature, and this was discussed in relation to the trauma of adoption, as part of participants' narratives around growing-up adopted. Beyond living the emotional legacy of disconnection from their birth mothers, participants did not cite many instances in which their adoptive status was pathologised by others. Two participants did, however, in the context of intimate relationships. In Rachel's case, a pitfall of being adopted was identified by her partner, namely being self-focused and over-analytical. Shane's self-observations were in agreement with this point, however, he perceived that this might not be entirely negative, perhaps a normal response to working through the implications of adoption: "…you have that constant

self-analysis and trying to unpick things the whole time, sometimes too much. But you do have a far more realistic view of yourself I think, as to where your weak points are." Shane spoke about the pathologising discourse surrounding adoptees and its use by others in deflecting responsibility for interpersonal difficulties, in regards to his relationship:

> …like with my wife, it just became apparent, this kind of thing dawned on me 'she doesn't actually want me', and that conversation kept replaying and she kept denying it, and then she kept pushing it back at me 'no it's cos you're adopted'…and it got kind of used as this weapon to deflect this criticism…

Reference to the adoptee abandonment trope is implicit in Shane's quote; that he is imagining rejection or anticipating abandonment due to his being-adopted. As Natasha mentioned earlier (the Emotional Legacy section, 111), this trope is a truism in everyday discourse as well as in some adoptee narratives. The argument for adoptee trauma was perhaps most powerfully made and relayed to the non-adopted public by Nancy Verrier in The Primal Wound (1993), in which she attributed specific adoptee vulnerabilities to the separation from their birth mother.

Based on his self-awareness of his adoption 'issues', Shane was reluctant to accept full responsibility for the relationship difficulties: "My wife asked me to go to a specialist adoption counsellor, and I said 'that's fine, I'm willing to do that but you're trying to get yourself off the hook by saying that's the problem…don't think that just me going and fixing myself is going to fix our relationship'."

In the context of the "couple relationship", partners support each other to come to terms with important issues in their past and current life, and for adoptees this will likely include adoption. Partners' positions and perspectives in relation to adoptees' adoptive belonging and birth origins constitute a significant influence (Greco, Rosnati and Ferrari 2015, 27-8, 42). With the exception of three single participants, all others were in relationships, the majority of which appeared to discuss the participant's adoption and their birth origins fairly openly. Three participants noted the positivity of having a partner who was also adopted, someone who understood this significant life experience. Ten participants noted having the support of spouses or partners in searching for birth family (Sonya, Mere, Rick, Kere, Lisa, Natasha, Daniel, Dean, Jenny, Rachel); in some cases (Dean, Daniel), a spouse or partner had provided the impetus.

In the absence of further detail, it can only be assumed that these participants were part of couples who converged in their acknowledgement and valorisation (perceiving added value) of the adopted person's birth and adoptive connections (Greco, Rosnati and Ferrari 2015, 32-3). Shane was

the only participant to articulate a discrepancy between his own and his non-adopted wife's feelings about the effects of adoption – namely his wife's emphasis on the negative aspects, and her attribution of these to their relationship difficulties ("using adoption" micro-aggression: Garber 2014, 47). In comparison, Rachel's comments allude to the balance that a non-adopted partner's perspectives can bring; Rachel's Māori partner also supported her through her anxiety about engaging with the Māori world, assuring her that her upbringing outside did not need to be a barrier. There is a distinction between what may be a supportive and balancing counterpoint, and denial, dismissal or pathologisation. Although both Shane's and Rachel's partners acknowledged their difficulties derived from being adopted, Shane felt blamed for his, whereas Rachel reported feeling accepted for hers: "He really helped me and he's been a massive influence on me with, like supporting me…He's very forgiving and accepts people for who they are, so that was really big to have that in my life, yes."

Adoption has been associated with negative forms of attachment, and a default perception of the self as not worthy of love and attention (Field and Pond 2018, 28). As in the example shared by Shane, partners are in a position to exploit this vulnerability, and engage affective politics that pathologise adoptee negative affect and insinuate a "neurotic subjectivity" (Dragojilovic and Broom 2017, 98; Rudy 2019, 206, 209). While research has investigated adoptee insecure attachment and negative relational attitudes and difficulties (Field and Pond 2018, 36), there has been much less attention given to the role of partners. To not adopt a more relational focus overlooks the interpersonal and discursive dynamics in action in such adoption microaggressions, risking the re-pathologisation of adoptees.

Becoming a (Māori adoptee) parent

Eleven participants are parents; nine to biological children (Shane, Sonya, Mere, Lisa, Rick, Dean, Kere, Jenny, Daniel), and two (Paul, Natasha) have adopted children. For all participants with children, their being adopted had a significant bearing on either their decision to have children (and how), or how they approached parenting.

Having a biological connection

The experience of growing up without a biological connection meant that Lisa was particularly invested in becoming a parent: "For me part of really wanting a baby was to have that [shared biology] with someone." As a gay woman, conception required some additional planning and deliberation, but it was important to Lisa that she carry and give birth to her own biological child: "I wanted children but I think if it weren't for [being adopted] I'd be perfectly happy with my partner carrying our children

because I'm a lot older than her, it's actually been a real journey for me to have a baby, but yeah, if it was at all possible, I was going to do it, and that was about creating my own new, not adopted [family]…"

Being-adopted and gay meant that Lisa was particularly conscious of being a "differently constituted" family, and all that that entails:

> We're a different family as well, [my daughter's] not genetically related to her other mum and…I think that that might be really good for me to work through as well…I know other people who have had children with an anonymous sperm donor because they are a complete family and don't need another father or whatever, and I would never do that to a child…I think that's an unnecessary addition to being a slightly less than common family type. I think knowing what that's like will help us, will help me to know that it's really important for her to stay in contact with her father.

Daniel also recognised the affirmation associated with becoming a biological father, feeling that it gave him a sense of validity, and a solid basis: "I felt like I was the start of the family tree…but I mean that's never the case, you've always got ancestors. But yeah it did sort of ground it a bit, in that regard, or rooted." Even though she has not had children herself, Rachel had heard some of the same sentiments about biological parenthood from adopted friends: "I've had friends that have said that it's finally when they've had kids, they don't have to worry about a bit of this or a bit of that, it's their flesh and blood."

For Jenny and her husband, being both adoptees gave them a special connection, and also a very powerful motivation to have their own biological family, and create their own future: "So our first date, we were talking and he said 'I'm adopted' and it was kapow, there was a bond there that just made so much sense. We just got each other…for us it was like, go back to that abyss thing, you know this is our future going forward for us. And we are beginning to establish a dynasty almost…and so [our children] are pretty precious." As the biological 'offspring' of two adoptees, Jenny's children have an additional significance. They are a salve for the "immediate struggle" around connection and separation, and so too for the "ultimate struggle" of biological continuity ("symbolic immortality": Lifton 1976, 4).

Parenting in a more natural way

Two participants reported feeling that parenting comes 'naturally' because of the biological connection. Jenny contrasted her adoptive mother's experience of not having an innate feeling of how

to parent her adopted children, with her own: "I found with my kids, I just naturally know, I just do, and I kind of have a feeling of what they might be really good at because of who David and I are." Based on the tenets of biological kinship (likeness, resemblance, heredity), Jenny feels she is in a better position to know her children, and therefore how to parent them.

Kere has a particular understanding of 'natural' when it comes to parenting, based on his own adoption and heteronormative experience.

> I think parenting's a natural thing. So the only time adoption comes into it…personally I can't stand the way they do adoption now, the whole open adoption thing, it doesn't work for me, I'd never do it…What pisses me off is that the adopted child doesn't get a choice…and I'm a staunch believer in a mum and dad right? And I feel sorry for those kids, like I know what happened to me and whilst society would say 'oh things are far more open now', those kids will be so much more bullied than I ever was. It'll be horrendous and the bullying's all in here now (pointing to cellphone).

Kere's particularly strong views centre around what he believes is in the best interests of the adopted child. Reflecting on his own experience of being bullied for being adopted, he imagines that it would be more difficult for a child adopted into a non-heterosexual family. Kere does not specify what his reservations are about open adoption, but this is an interesting opinion given his experience of the difficulties of a closed adoption.

Jenny had the experience of being a birth mother, giving two children up for adoption. Her decision to relinquish those children was in part determined by circumstance (first being a young mother, and later going through marriage breakdown), but also by her positive experience of adoption:

> I was 16, I really felt like that's something I really wanted but now was not the right time…I just felt I had a great, great childhood and abortion was out because if I believed in abortion then I wouldn't be here, if my mother had thought that…so I just went into it thinking I've had a great childhood, I want to give that to another family, it's not just about the boy but also about his adoptive parents, I wanted them to have that too…So that's been the right decision I think…

The decision was not taken lightly, and Jenny experienced "huge shame" as well as the difficulty of leaving her babies at the hospital. However, reuniting with her eldest son, Jenny notes an enduring naturalness of biological connection: "We got on like a house on fire and my kids got on with him. Just there was this natural, natural feeling of belonging to each other."

Shane also felt an immediate bond or connection with his biological children. His experience resonated with his birth mother's account of her bond with him in hospital after he was born:

> She'd written this very special kind of letter to me shortly after we met, and she talked about how I was with her and I was breastfeeding for a couple of weeks, and she said she was given this last moment to say her goodbyes and she said I reached up and grabbed her by the thumbs and just stared intently at her for a good solid couple of minutes and, when I talked about this whole thing about bonding with her she said 'yeah exactly, that's what was happening there', and I think you're bonded anyway, I don't think you're born and then you bond, I think it's just there.

In contrast, Mere's experience of giving birth reinforced the incomprehensibility of her birth mother's decision: "I must say when we were in that whole [labour] process…I was sitting there thinking 'why did she give me away?' and then when [my daughter] came out, and she was given to me, and I was like 'how can you give this away?' lots of tears around that, I just didn't understand how a mother could do that, but it is what that is." Either way, positive or negative, having the experience of becoming a parent provides adoptees with a comparator for their experiences of having been parented. The relationship between adoption experience and parenting experience is bi-directional, and participants drew on their being-adopted to inform their intentions and aspirations as parents.

Healing, undoing and correcting through parenting

Given his traumatic adoptive upbringing, and his disappointing reunion with his birth parents, Rick has adopted a slightly detached perspective on family and kinship. He does, however, consider his becoming a parent an opportunity to heal: "The biggest healing is creating my own family to continue the process and create life." Furthermore, Rick wanted to ensure that the negative parenting he had received, at the hands of both his adoptive and birth parents, would not be perpetuated: "…my most important is my own relationship and my wife and my kids. I don't want to infect my kids with any of my past…I don't want them to be touched by it in any way'…for me it's a lot of just undoing."

Emma questioned the idea that having her own children might heal the effects of adoption: "No I wouldn't want to have a baby, fuck that. And people have said that to me, 'oh you're an adopted child, you should have children so that you can heal yourself', I'm like having a fucking chain around my neck that is financially draining is not going to heal me, spending $150 a fortnight on a counsellor

will heal me." Emma was already engaged in therapy to address her adoption-related issues, and she was clear that this was a more appropriate (and effective) means than parenting for that particular end.

Adoption can be different from what we experienced

Rua has also not had children, a matter that weighed on her until she realised that biological parenthood was not the only option. Observing her brother Paul adopt a child, Rua realised that that might be another possibility: "I always thought I just wanted to have my own [children] because of the blood thing but my brother…he's adopted a baby, and just the difference in their way of growing, raising my nephew is totally different to how we were, so I know that I don't have to have a baby born from me, I just feel like I want, well because I'm built that way but if it comes either way then that's going to be okay." Natasha had a similar realisation; after several unsuccessful cycles of donor insemination, she arrived at the conclusion that "actually, my genetics are in my nieces and nephews, it's all good, I don't need to proliferate." Natasha still had a desire to raise some children and pass on her tikanga and kawa, so adoption was the next logical option.

Both Natasha and Paul have adopted children in the era of open adoption, but beyond that, they have taken steps to ensure that some of the cons of their own adoptions are prevented. For Natasha, this involves ensuring her children know their whakapapa, but also, that her adoptee abandonment issues do not adversely affect her parenting: "I've given them my whakapapa and really important for them to know what their bloodline is too, so yes [being adopted] absolutely influences everything to do with my parenting. And trying to show that unconditional love without the abandonment stuff popping up."

Paul admitted that he had thought of biological parenthood as a way that he would "be able to re-correct the whole thing." This statement implies a similar sentiment to that made by other participants – that there is a redemptive quality of giving birth to and raising a biological child. Although Paul does not specify what he thinks ought to be corrected, in light of his narrative it could be surmised that this includes parenting based on connection to birth origins as opposed to disconnection. In becoming an adoptive father, Paul and his wife have made some conscious decisions to ensure a more positive and connected adoption experience for their son:

> …the name that the birth mother gave to him… we kept it. But those are all parts of the learning because that instantly gave him a connectedness back to his iwi and his tūrangawaewae, for example recently we've been down to [his ancestral land] and seen graves and heard stories where there's always been a [son's name] in the generations so things like that were always important to get right… one of the things we've done…is got him into a bilingual preschool

> early and he's doing his pepeha when he's introducing himself. So he's being embedded in now and we've got his family tree and other things like that.

Rua, Natasha and Paul imply an initial aversion to adopting rather than procreating. However, for differing reasons, adoptive parenting emerged as an option in which there is also the possibility for fulfilment and 'redemption'. Natasha and Paul expressed a desire for their children's adoption experiences to be different from their experiences of closed adoption. This was largely centred on being cognisant of their children's whakapapa and recognising its significance.

Transmitting Māori identity

As mentioned by Paul above, bringing children up with more connection and knowledge of being Māori than they had growing up, was important to participants. However, apart from whakapapa (where known), adoptees themselves did not always feel confident in their knowledge of things Māori. For some participants, this was not of particular concern or importance – Rick and Kere for instance, felt it was sufficient for their children to know that they are Māori, not necessarily to identify or 'perform' a Māori identity. In the following quote, Rick explains that he has not yet discussed his children's Māoriness with them, and implies that this is somewhat hampered by his lack of Māori enculturation. He has, however, given some thought as to what his children's experience as Māori may be like, based on their appearance: "…my kids will know where they're from…well, if we talk…because I wasn't brought up Māori and I never learned to speak Māori…And when I have a look at my kids, you have a look at my son, he's looking more like me but he's quite white. And yet my daughter's quite dark and I'm grateful in that sense cos he won't be given the same hard time…" Taken in conjunction with other parts of his narrative, Rick implies here that visibly Māori boys are subject to more harsh, racist treatment than girls, based on his experience.

Kere attributed his children's lack of identification as Māori to the largely Pākehā environment that they're being enculturated within, but also with his identification, impacted by his adoption and lack of knowledge of whakapapa:

> They're not interested at all, but I think a lot of that's to do with the culture that you're brought up in. See there's no Māori in our house, my wife's fully Pākehā and I guess in all intents and purpose so am I. When I…started the te reo course, like I always talk about it, and they know in my room I have a greenstone carving and we've always talked about it and I said 'that's

> special to me.' And so they know there's something there, that's in Dad, but the school they go to is just flipping white and that's what you grow up with, you know.

Similarly to Kere, Mere noted the challenge of bringing children up with a stronger sense of being Māori, in Pākehā-dominated environments. She is disappointed by that and feels partly responsible for not being able to nurture her daughter in things Māori:

> I've only got one child, and I really wanted her to be encompassed in the whole kaupapa thing, and so off we go to *kōhanga* (Māori language medium pre-school), and like we were both working parents, and so the first thing around the kōhanga was 'you need to be *awhi*-ing (embracing), you need to do this, you need to do that', and so I had to take her and put her into the Pākehā system and that's where she stayed…so then I thought 'wow man, useless, bad Māori' (laughing). Bad Māori.

Dean has had the opposite experience with his two boys; they have been supported to learn te reo and tikanga Māori at school and have openly sought that knowledge for themselves. Meeting his birth father linked his sons in with a wider whānau, within which their *taha Māori* (Māori side) could be further nurtured and supported. Dean is very appreciative of this, given his limited knowledge and discomfort with things Māori: "And the boys they love it up there and that's all sort of stemmed now too, like both boys are doing so well at school and particularly with Māori and things like that…we haven't really had to encourage them because they've taken it off their own bat, and it's something that I'm really thankful for."

As stated above, Natasha and Paul adopted Māori children, and as part of the open adoption system, they have been provided with information about their children's whakapapa and birth whānau. They both noted that as adoptive parents of Māori children they feel obligated to ensure that their children maintain connections to te ao Māori.

Together with her Māori husband, Sonya has created a "Māori life", which has laid the foundations for bringing up her children as Māori:

> [My husband] and I live in Aotearoa, we immerse ourselves in things Māori, we are a part of a Māori community, we participate in Māori traditional activities…So it's like our life is Māori, everything we do is about being Māori…[Adoption's] a huge part of my life because of the minefield of how I'm going to support my son to be able to stand up and say who he is and

> where he's from…he is Māori…I don't want him to have to have to feel like he has to justify who he is to anybody.

Sonya has given her son an ancestral name and enrolled him in a Māori medium school – but perhaps of greatest importance to her, is raising him according to Māori values. Lisa has done the same. Furthermore, her employment in a Māori tertiary institution in a small community highly populated by Māori means her daughter will have some exposure to an environment in which being Māori is normalised – a world away from how Lisa herself was raised. As Lisa describes, a Māori environment supports a different level of engagement with being-Māori: "I think if I lived somewhere where most of my friends and colleagues were Pākehā, I would feel the need to decide how to express or exert my Māoriness, and I suspect I would do it through the more visible tikanga that doesn't actually have a lot of importance to me. Whereas living and working in a Māori community means I'm not trying to prove anything, and I'm not really thinking about how to be Māori—I can just be me, and think about where that's consistent or not with tikanga."

Becoming a parent is a profound experience that impacts significantly on identity and role, and fundamentally changes life circumstances. Thus, adjusting to parenthood is taxing, and no less for the adoptee. Extant literature suggests that this experience may be more challenging, or extra-dimensional, a time when the duality of biological and adopted origins is apparent, and tensions associated with belonging to both a biological and an adoptive family, arise (Field and Pond 2018, 41). However, for most participants, becoming a parent was not the first time that these tensions had surfaced for them – Sonya, Lisa, Rick, Kere, Natasha, Shane and Paul each became parents some time after they had met their birth families. However, the post-reunion relationship with birth families, more often than not, does not conform to the model of a typical nuclear biological family, rather that of a more distant kinship that does not carry the same obligations or commitments. All adoptees then, irrespective of whether they had reclaimed membership to their birth families, would draw on their experiences growing up in their adoptive families (modelled on biological kinship), to inform their feelings about and approaches to parenting.

Parenthood therefore presents a *different* duality of biological and adopted origins from meeting birth family – it promises the *unification* of biological connection and nurture, something that adoptees have not had the experience of, and which they anticipate positively (Pinkerton 2010, 69-70). Participants' emphasis on biological/genetic connection through biological reproduction is a common theme in the literature. It is valued for not only its novelty, but the deeper sense of connection and belonging that it will potentially yield, as well as physical resemblance and mirroring (Hampton 1997, 100; Phillips 2010, 99; Field and Pond 2018, 40-1; Humphrey 2003, iii). The sense of security and

genealogical continuity established through becoming parents noted by Hampton (1997, 100) and Vaccaro (2012, 184), was most strongly expressed by Jenny as part of her establishment of a biological family with her adopted husband. Raising biological children was the first option explored by participating parents, demonstrating the compulsion of biological kinship (also reported in Pinkerton 2010, 70).

Only one participant became a birth mother; in discussing these experiences, Jenny attributed the decision primarily to her positive experience of adoption, and, in common with participants in Hampton's (1997, 95) research, a deep discomfort with the notion of abortion because of what that would have meant for her had her birth mother chosen that option. Although Jenny did not draw a connection with her birth mother's experience, she understood how difficult a choice it was. In contrast, giving birth reinforced Mere's lack of empathy with her birth mother's situation, leading her to think of her mother as uncaring and selfish.

Common to all participants was the desire to correct perceived flaws or failings of the adoptive family (see also Hampton 1997, 85). This might be partially accomplished through biological connection, which some participants perceived would enable parenting with the benefit of knowing their children genealogically. However, some participants also reported a desire to raise their children differently – in Rick's case providing a functional, healthy environment, for Shane, ensuring adequate bonding, and for all, access to cultural heritage. Not everyone felt sufficiently equipped to transmit Māori cultural identity however, either in terms of their cultural proficiency, or their ability to access Māori community networks and support structures. Neither Rick nor Kere, for instance, lived in Māori communities, and were respectively geographically removed from or prevented from knowing birth whānau, and Mere found that her working commitments constituted a barrier to the expected participation in kōhanga reo. Another fundamental barrier also seemed to be at work: *how do you bring your biological child up as Māori, when you have not been brought up as Māori?* Māori adoptees have learned what it means to be Māori as adults, often through peers and institutions rather than through familial and parental relationships. These models of transmission are somewhat different (Day, Godon-Decoteau and Suyemoto 2015, 361; Samuels 2010, 33), and not necessarily directly transferrable to the parent-child relationship.

Mere in particular had cited feeling some guilt for not succeeding in teaching her daughter te reo. One imperative that Māori adoptee parents have to grapple with is their part in te reo revitalisation with their children, given the dire state of the Māori language and increased emphasis on

intergenerational transmission starting in the home (Reese et al. 2018, 360-1; Chrisp 2005, 151[100]). Te reo revitalisation sits in a wider context of Māori development and advancement, of which the ultimate aim is the production of confident Māori citizens so that the effects of colonisation and assimilation might be reversed (Durie 2011, 143; Mead, 1997, 84). These are powerful discourses that all those who identify as Māori (including participants) will have been exposed to, and will to varying degrees feel compelled to adhere to, including in their roles as parents. Sonya and Lisa in particular appear to have internalised such expectations; a significant focus of their parenting lies with raising their children *as Māori*, in such a way that being-Māori is naturalised. A focus upon these experiences was outside the scope of the present research, but it is also significant that a number of participants are employed in Māori-focused positions, contributing to Māori development and advancement by way of their professional endeavours (see Working-Māori section, 230). This, as well as taking responsibility for enculturating the next generation of Māori, demonstrates a particular level of socio-political commitment.

Transracial adoptive parenting has been contested on the basis that it inadequately prepares children for a racialised world (Patton 2000, 16; Jennings 2006, 560), and the reverse is assumed to be true: that ethnic or racial minority parents raising their own children will instill a sense of racial/ethnic consciousness (Lee 2003, 717-8). The point does not need to be laboured that transracially adopted parents will be somewhat compromised in this regard, unless they have undertaken significant identity work and 'reculturation' themselves (this will be discussed in the next section).

This latter point is supported in one of very few pieces of research to have investigated motherhood among transracial adoptees. Day, Godon-Decoteau and Suyemoto (2015, 363) identified that becoming a mother impelled Korean adoptees to reflect upon their developmental cultural and racial experiences linked to their identities and self-concepts. Then, in consideration of the types of experiences they wanted to be able to offer their children, adoptees reframed their experiences and identities, and took action to increase their cultural knowledge, resist internalising racism, engage in ethnic and racial affinity based experiences and travel to their ancestral homelands. These are actions that participants in the current study have also undertaken, as part of their adult Māori identity development and reconnection with the Māori world, in parallel with their being-Māori-parents. Learning about tikanga and te reo Māori offers the opportunity to not only increase knowledge, but engage with other Māori.

[100] See Chrisp (2005, 160) onwards for discussion of barriers to intergenerational language transmission: language knowledge and confidence in abilities, identity issues and triggers, dominance of English in society, lack of supportive people to speak Māori with. Many of these factors cited by non-adopted Māori will be also evident, perhaps even amplified among adopted Māori.

Learning to be Māori

The notion of learning to be Māori constituted a significant part of participants' narratives around being-adopted-and-Māori. There were some mixed feelings around this; while learning promised increased belonging and comfort in terms of Māori identity, it was a necessity due to adoptees' circumstances, and so the very need to learn reinforced what was lost via adoption. Furthermore, opening oneself to learning risked being discovered as culturally wanting, a fear and vulnerability not confined to Māori adoptees.

Jenny describes her being-adopted-and-Māori using the metaphor of a book, with a recognisable Māori title, but little else. "I mean I've felt it all my life, I just felt that there's part of me that's missing. There's a part of me that is there but I don't know anything about and it felt like it's kind of a big part so I've recognised the book cover, okay I've got that far and I'm filling in that very nicely, I've got you know title in Māori and I'm decorating that very nicely but how do I fill those pages in and what does that look like and how do I do that?" In tandem with her journey to find her Māori birth father and her whakapapa, Jenny is considering how else she might populate the blank pages with content. Learning about things Māori formally, including te reo, is one of those pathways.

Eleven participants reported having engaged in some formal learning relating to te ao or te reo Māori in order to address their 'deficits' in terms of knowledge and socialisation. Formal learning infrastructure is well-established and more accessible than more 'organic' and informal modes – many 20th-21st century whānau are not proficient in te reo and tikanga Māori, and the ability to learn by immersion in culture is limited.

Critical, challenging and inauthentic

For most participants, learning te reo and tikanga Māori is not necessarily an easy or natural process, due to their upbringing largely in the Pākehā world. To Rua, there is still something that "feels foreign" about being-Māori, and Rachel noted that despite being open to learning, there was still a lot relating to tikanga that she finds confusing. Some participants distinguished between knowledge ascertained in the classroom, and what they imagined was a superior form of understanding on the basis of lived experience, or informally in childhood:

> I don't know if I'm ever really gonna get that place…I can read up about things or research things but I haven't been there in the time of, so I don't have the same wairua or the *ako* (learning) or the *mauri* (life force) with how it must have felt that our people have been through so I never carry that but I do carry what I know now… (Rua)

> It's so much more powerful and awesome to be learning that as a child with others, I would think. I've gone to uni, I've gone to the wānanga, and I still haven't got the reo in my brain, and I realise now I've had to accept the fact that it's not gonna get there…people that have been entrenched in it all their lives, there's jealous because I'll never have that, jealous for the fact that that's been taken from me, annoyed that that's been taken from me, and yes you can go to university, but it's still different. (Mere)

Common to each of these comments is that of the futility of learning – will participants ever reach their aspiration of understanding tikanga and being proficient in te reo? Shane describes the process of learning and re-claiming as seeming insurmountable at times:

> I certainly think that being adopted's been a big obstacle in the road because I'm just unsure about, even though I've got this whakapapa and I'm proud of it, you just get this feeling that it doesn't matter how hard you try, you can never get it back, and maybe I'm just pessimistic and defeatist, but you swing between these extremes, wanting to make the effort and do it and try and catch up and then you just see the mountain that there is to climb and you think 'nah', at what point will I feel comfortable with this?

As Shane touches on, for many participants there feels to be some kind of internal barrier holding them back, a possible consequence of being adopted. Despite knowing his whakapapa and having met his birth family, in theory possessing all that is needed to 'complete' his identity, Shane considers his personal identity not yet fully 'resolved'. Shane considers this is a significant barrier to his learning of te reo. Picking up on that point, Jenny refers to the elusiveness of Māori identity and belonging, as a barrier to her 'owning' te reo: "…it's very raw and I think this is one of the other things that people who are not adopted don't get. That these emotions around so many of these issues, especially around identity and belonging are very deep and very raw and difficult and difficult to grasp, it's sort of like they're slime and it just keeps running through your fingers, like how do I, do I own this te reo?"

The difficulty of coming to terms with adoption and disconnection in establishing identity and belonging is evident in Jenny's comments. The unattainability of these things for adoptees is stressed, as well as the associated emotions. Rather than seeing adoption and its effects as externally imposed, unrelated to a personal deficiency or failing, participants appeared to internalise deeply their 'inauthenticity' and lack of knowledge as Māori. Rachel suggested that this might be linked to fear of rejection:

> And I don't know if it's my personality or just being really shy, but I've seen some friends who have just been brought up like me and not in full Māori culture and they've been able to just get over it and just do it and I really admire that. I get really scared about it, I can't explain it sometimes, whether it's the unknown or just because I don't know, I guess it's just that rejection thing, I just feel like if I'm rejected, I wouldn't really have anything else to…"

Rachel compares herself to other non-adopted Māori she knows, who have been able to learn tikanga and te reo Māori seemingly without the same reticence. If the disconnection and loss of tikanga and te reo (and indeed, upbringing without Māori parents) is common to many Māori, what makes the difference for Māori adoptees? In the last sentence, Rachel alludes to the enormous loss that she would feel if she was rejected by her birth whānau (and by extension other Māori); she feels she "wouldn't really have anything else". What is left and where to go for the Māori adoptee who is not accepted for who they are and want to be? Thus, the stakes are high and Māori adoptees are vulnerable – learning exposes their 'lack'. Recognising that everyone is learning provided some reassurance to Rachel.

The ultimate goal of learning tikanga and te reo for many participants was to feel *comfortable* being-Māori. Learning tikanga and te reo promised to increase participants' knowledge so that they could operate more effectively in Māori spaces, and stand behind their identity claims. In the following quote, Lisa, similarly to Shane, expresses feeling demoralised by the possibility of not reaching this endpoint: "It makes me sad that I will probably never be comfortable in tikanga, I'm always wondering if I'm doing something wrong, embarrassing the people I'm with, that's exhausting especially when I work at [a Māori academic institution] where this comes up a lot. It would be nice to feel home sometimes, comfortable, and I don't have that many places, I know lots of other people don't either." Lisa alludes to the emotional labour inherent in this position, but also, that she is not alone in that.

Learning as reculturation

Although the concept of "birth culture" is critiqued for being a contradiction in terms (Homans 2007, 61), many transracial adoptees are motivated to bridge the gap between the culture that they live and grew up in, and that related to their birth heritage (Baden et al. 2012, 388). Māori adoptees are by and large enculturated according to New Zealand European norms and values, due to their adoption by predominantly Pākehā parents. Natasha, Donna-Marie and Sonya are exceptions in the present study, having some exposure to Māori values and worldview through their Māori adoptive parents. In addition, seven participants noted the support of things Māori by their Pākehā adoptive parents: Shane's father, for instance, began learning te reo in an act of solidarity, Jenny's family attended a

church with a large Māori congregation for a time, and Emma noted that her parents were keen for her to be involved in Māori groups and activities. This is perhaps the distinguishing factor between indigenous transracial adoptees and non-indigenous transracial or transnational adoptees. Where adoptees are socialised in their country of origin, their culture has an enduring presence in their lives, even if only from afar, and there is arguably greater access to it. Furthermore, for the adoptees in this study, Māori culture was undergoing something of a 'renaissance' in the period when they were either children or young adults. As a result, identifying as Māori was viewed increasingly positively, without the profoundly negative associations of previous decades. In spite of these developments however, Māori culture as experienced by adoptees growing up may nonetheless have been through the lens of their adoptive dominant culture, and without a personal connection. Thus, as adults all but two participants felt compelled to explore for themselves, an 'insider' perspective of the Māori world, and where they fit in it. Processes of formal and informal learning played a critical part in this.

Baden et al (2012, 389) term this process "reculturation" – an adoptee's active acculturation to or "reclaiming" of a culture not the same as their adoptive parents' culture, nor dominant in their lived environment. In the absence of post-adoption support services in New Zealand, nor a particularly strong recognition of Māori adoptees as a distinct group, participants tended to follow the "revitalisation" pathway established in response to the large-scale loss of Māori language and culture in Māori society. This often took the form of te reo and Māori studies classes in tertiary institutions, alongside other Māori and non-Māori learners, and joining networks of Māori students and peers (see also Samuels 2010, 33). In terms of reculturative activities, classes provided knowledge-based information in which participants could learn Māori history and language, and thereby traditions, values and practices; and contact with Māori peers and mentors provided opportunities to put this knowledge into action through interaction (Baden et al. 2012, 394).

Immersive 'cultural' experiences, in contrast, were less commonly cited by participants, although what these are exactly might require redefinition. Participants were exposed, either through their birth whānau or other Māori communities, to "diverse Māori realities" (Durie 1995, 2), equally authentic if not 'traditional' or 'precolonial'. Most participants travelled to ancestral homelands albeit on time-limited, isolated trips rather than residence for an extended duration (see Going Home section, 230). These return journeys were a form of experiential, place-based learning, enabling deeper connections and lived experiences that affirmed whānau, hapū and iwi membership.

In common with other transracial adoptees (Baden et al. 2012, 390), participants sought a level of comfort in themselves as (Māori) ethnic beings as well as proficiency in cultural knowledge and skills. These two outcomes entailed slightly different reculturative experiences – being in Māori spaces with Māori peers or relatives, as well as formal learning. Participants generally pursued both types of

learning experiences, in pan-Māori and whakapapa-based encounters, to gain a broad experience of te ao Māori.

Baden et al (2012, 390) draw a distinction between acculturation and reclamation, noting that reclamation carries heightened expectations. The term reclaim suggests something has been lost or abandoned, and that it must be restored to its former or 'natural' state. Thus, rather than simply learning or acculturating to another 'host' culture, transracial adoptees are learning and reclaiming *their* culture that through adoption, has been lost to them. The emotional valence of acculturating compared to reclaiming is therefore significantly different. Furthermore, the 'natural' state expected of transracial adoptees by society is that derived from their birth and ethnic heritage, given the expectation of matching between birth origins, physical appearance or race, and cultural practices (Baden et al. 2012, 390). The seamless (re)integration, 'fitting', belonging and ease associated with 'naturalness' sets a high, possibly unattainable bar. This discourse of reclamation may go some way to explaining the reticence and emotion-laden nature of learning-to-be-Māori articulated by participants. That is, unless the notion is rejected or reframed.

With regards to searching for birth whānau, Paul questioned whether a background *is* lost through adoption, and therefore, whether reclamation was needed (see Chapter Eight, 146). If reculturation is less about loss and reclamation, then emphasis might also be less on what one does not know, and more on what is positive and possible from learning. Taking a different tack, Donna-Marie developed a narrative that countered an individualised notion of reclamation. She reframed the lack of reo among her and her whānau somewhat, by emphasising what she was learning from them in the process of reconnection – the lived, felt experience of aroha, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. Furthermore, she contrasted the privileged reality of being able to spare the time and resources to learn te reo, with her whānau members' everyday realities fulfilling their social roles and obligations as whānau. To say that one is more 'Māori' than the other, felt like an inappropriate value judgement. Thus, Donna-Marie and Paul both developed narratives which enabled them to alleviate some of the personal pressure to be culturally proficient. In Donna-Marie's case, she placed reculturation squarely in her whānau context, reframing it as a shared journey and around things other than language.

Donna-Marie's narrative brought together her cultural losses with that of her whānau losses, and by extension, the widespread cultural losses experienced by Māori as a result of colonisation. Perhaps placing adoption-related cultural losses within the wider phenomenon of colonisation may enable adoptees to situate the locus of control externally rather than internally, and therefore relinquish

some of the felt responsibility or whakamā?[101] Rachel found it comforting to know that she was not alone as an adoptee in needing to learn te reo Māori, while Lisa was careful to note that her lack of knowledge and comfort was also experienced by non-adopted Māori. Both pondered the contours of adoption and colonisation in their experiences of being-adopted-and-Māori, where one ends and the other begins, what can be attributed to adoption, what cannot, and what are common effects of the overarching colonial project?

Several other participants conceded that adoption is part and parcel of colonisation, but, as is apparent in the Weighing Up 'What If?' section, this did not necessarily factor in their analysis of their own losses and gains. Similarly to the primal wound thesis, a colonisation thesis might be enticing but viewed as unproductive, overly simplistic, and potentially dishonouring their adoptive families. Furthermore, in a context in which Māori adoptees have been counted as *beneficiaries* rather than subjects or victims of colonisation, their claims against colonialism may be less likely to be validated, and they ultimately carry the burden of their losses alone. Indeed, participants found themselves sitting alongside other disenfranchised and dispossessed Māori in formal learning environments. This wasn't always a comfortable fit. Kere in particular, felt that his adoptive differences were perceived unfavourably by other Māori, namely his fair appearance, his inability to recite whakapapa, and his lack of conformity to Māori stereotype:

> I'd say to them I was North Island Māori, 'oh where's your whakapapa', this is a little bit of my story and… I tend to wear a shirt and so I'd finish work and I'd go to the course dressed like this and everyone else there, there's this thing about Māori where you've got to sort of look a bit rough and a bit poor…at the start of the course there was a lot of Māori there and it was interesting, they were really challenged by me…I'd sit there and think…the rejection I'm getting here is like I got when I was a kid and it hasn't changed.

Thus, for some adoptees, the difficult effects of their adoption extend to the reculturation process.

Further contributing to a sense of alienation is the lack of Māori adoptee solidarity or collectivisation compared to other transracial (particularly transnational) adoptee populations. Where Baden et al (2012, 395) noted a significant proportion of Korean American adoptees identify most comfortably with other adoptees and neither members of their birth culture or adoptive culture, this is a less viable option for Māori adoptees. Participants noted their relative isolation from others with the

[101] Baden et al (2012, 389) hoped that defining reculturation might serve to legitimise the place of transracial adoptees within the larger ethnic groups, whilst also acknowledging their unique circumstances.

same experience, *and* a lack of adoption and race-related discussion with their adopted siblings – both products of the silences and omissions of closed adoption discourse. In her research with transracial multiracial African-American adoptees, Samuels (2010, 36) found that these factors fostered adoptees' sense of themselves as different in significant ways from "nearly everyone they knew", and moreover complicated their search for 'authentic' Black identity and kinship.

In spite of some of these challenges, participants continued to pursue "reculturation" and to contribute to the wider Māori revitalisation project in several ways – as parents, as learners, and in a professional capacity. Even where participants expressed ambivalence or doubt that they would ever be comfortable or proficient, they found meaning in knowing that their efforts might in some way improve the experience of their children, and future generations.

Links to identity

Reculturation is an important part of identity navigation and development, enabling transracial adoptees to address the dissonance they might feel between their physical appearance or their birth origins and their lived cultural practice and affiliation (Baden et al. 2012, 388-9). Reculturative activities can achieve this in two ways – by supporting adoptees to become members of their ethnic communities, providing experiences of those communities and cultures, as well as the development of relevant knowledge and abilities. Therefore, reculturation has implications for both personal identity and social identities.

As well as formal institution-based learning, participants valued learning to be Māori via being in Māori contexts, and with other Māori. Far beyond selecting an identity label, this emphasises the relational, experiential bases and cultural embeddedness of identity development (Samuels 2010, 36). In terms of reculturation outcomes identified by Baden et al (2012, 35), the extent to which adoptive identity and culture are integrated with and in relation to aspects of birth culture, will vary for individual adoptees. These outcomes are discussed in the next section.

An adopted identity

Employing a framework of critical/social realism situates the concepts of self and identity as emergent from participants' experiences of being-adopted-and-Māori. In this section, notions of being, the self, and identities are discussed as they emerged in an "identity" code. Following their reconnection with birth family and/or becoming a biological parent, how do Māori adoptees think of themselves? How does becoming a bio-genealogical being affect self and identity?

Always-adopted

According to participants in this study, being-adopted endures. The adopted person is always adopted or living with the differences that adoption produces, and the associated adoptive identity is never entirely dismantled by the forging of bio-genealogical connections. Participants' experiences highlight that the coming to terms with adoption and what that means, is a lifelong endeavour. Connections and experiences with adoptive families remain, the effects of adoption have been and are lived, and those experiences are integrated in various ways into the self and narrative. The meaning attributed to being-adopted does vary among participants, the adoptive 'residue' more or less for individual adoptees.

In the quote below, Sonya emphasises the correspondence between factual reality and identity – who she is as an adopted daughter is a fact that cannot be altered or denied. However, she reserves the right to describe herself variably or fluidly, depending on context: "I am my parents' daughter, so I am [my adoptive parents'] daughter, I have always thought of myself as that, I *am* that. I also describe myself depending on the context and the situation…" Kere voiced a similar view, stating that irrespective of some of the sadness associated with being-adopted, it was undeniable and potentially positive: "Yeah I reckon you need to accept your place and that's just a cool place to be in…Cos that's actually who you are…It's pretty sad but then it's pretty cool because they can't take that away from you." Given their experiences, Sonya and Kere reserve the right to be both/and – adopted as well as bio-genealogical, enduring or continuous as well as fluid, actual and aspirational. Rather than seek to resolve these tensions, Sonya and Kere advocate for co-existence, accommodation and acceptance.

A forever dispersed being – not all in one place or family

Rick refers to both roots and routes in his discussion of his being-adopted and becoming a bio-genealogical being. He thinks of himself as rooted in two places, his adoptive family and his ancestral homelands. Using this metaphor, Rick suggests that his birth roots have to be entirely replanted rather than regrown from remaining rootstock. His thinking here reflects the notion of the adoptee's total severance from their birth family, legally and otherwise, and that of being 'strangers' upon return as an adult: "One of the things that I'm still aware of is as an adoptee it makes me different…so as opposed to other people who get planted into the ground, yes I had that but I've sort of had to replant myself back in there because I got ripped out and planted over here…as much as I lean against the maunga, my roots are in here."

Rick talks about undertaking the 'replanting' work himself, but this not necessarily involving being rooted to one place. Who Rick is is dispersed across two families, several geographical locations, and two almost mutually exclusive Māori and Pākehā worlds. As an adoptee, he is the one who must

move between, and he chooses to think of his being-Māori-and-adopted as a mobility (similarly to Donna-Marie) rather than as a calculation of birth and adoptive inheritance that exists within his person. Coupled with his previous comments about whakapapa-whenua connection, and the relationships with his wife and biological children, it seems that Māori indigeneity and a family 'of his own' gives Rick the grounding and security, a base from which to be mobile.

A unity of disparate parts

Jenny similarly talked about a fragmented being, but expressed a desire and necessity to unify those disparate parts: "I think for adoptive people we've got so many parts to ourselves and so many aspects that we do need to embrace it all. I think it's not just saying 'oh I'm not having anything to do with that or not going to acknowledge that'. It's about really embracing the whole, that we're a mess and that there are bits of us all over the place…and thinking all these bits have made me who I am today." Embracing the whole suggests seeking a level of comfort and acceptance, rather than some resolution of differences. This may entail becoming comfortable with "bits" that are in tension with one another, or awkwardly juxtaposed. As mentioned previously, Kere sees himself as a "White businessman" as well as a carver and artist. Furthermore, he posits that even if he was to learn his birth whakapapa and an associated pepeha, he would not abandon his adoptive identifications: "But if and when I do [find out my whakapapa] it doesn't mean that I'm going to then come up with a mihi back to there because that's still not me. I'm actually a Coaster and I'll always be, I'm a proud and staunch Coaster. I have to drink Monteith's beer just because I'm a Coaster (laughing)." The stereotype of a beer-drinking (New Zealand European) West Coaster is the polar opposite of that of a White businessman, which is the polar opposite of that of a Māori carver and artist. But these are all parts of who Kere has become, a product of his birth heritage and his adoptive upbringing.

Rachel considers herself in the same way, a product of both nature and nurture: "I say I have two families… my birth family and my family, one's the nurturing and one's the natural side of the family and sometimes it's just I'm a product of those two environments basically." However, in contrast to Rick, Rachel *did* want to work out what was derived from nature, and what was the product nurture. Meeting birth whānau promised the identification of her "true essence" – likenesses inherited from them, rather than those things developed in her adoptive environment: "I always wondered am I like that as a personality or is that my true essence of myself? And then when I met my whānau I thought 'oh that really must be part of who I really am'." Beyond the mirroring of physical resemblance, Rachel was able to ascertain the origins of some of her personality attributes from her relationship with her birth whānau. This had the effect of resolving some of the adoption identity angst

that she experienced. In comparison, Rua felt she was still engaged in "trying to find me cos I don't know who I am," over 20 years on from meeting and knowing her birth parents and whānau. The level of self-knowledge Rua is in search of requires a deeper understanding of whakapapa only possible through time and relationship.

Being-adopted as just another marginal identity

Identity is undoubtedly complicated by adoption. However, it is not the only way that adoptees might be "different." Lisa talked about having an "outsider" identity, not only because she is adopted, but because there are other ways in which she contravenes dominant norms or ways of being. Being-adopted is just another 'marginal' aspect to integrate and negotiate: "I feel like I sit on the outside a little bit…there can be many reasons why that is. It's sort of odd…having an outsider identity, being queer and whatever else, that it's just kind of another thing to integrate into who I am in ways I don't fit in."

Adopting a systemic concept of intersectionality, Lisa elaborates on the ways that she does not fit as well as the detrimental effects of being at the "subordinate poles" of social identity categories, in opposition to those who occupy the dominant poles of whiteness, Māoriness and heteronormativity (Prins 2006, 279): "My parents are casually racist, and we're uncomfortable with each other around that—they think I judge them for it, and I do, but I'm also upset by it…And then I'm not comfortable in Māori spaces, because I feel like I should know what to do, and I don't. And of course it plays into the other ways I don't fit in, as queer and vegan and geeky, etc." Being adopted has produced Lisa's differentness in two important respects: *from* other Māori in terms of her upbringing with Pākehā parents and lack of familiarity with tikanga, and *against* the prejudices of her adoptive parents who were told they were adopting a non-Māori infant. As Lisa notes, these differences "play into" or culminate with other 'marginal' social categories that she occupies. Elsewhere in her narrative Lisa emphasised the struggle in 'coming out' as Māori to her parents, akin to coming out as queer.[102] She highlights her parents' difficulty comprehending the basis of her interest in the Māori world, despite knowing she is Māori. Lisa's parents' assumptions regarding what being-adopted-and-Māori means

[102] Although this is not applicable to Lisa's experience according to her narrative, Cain (2017) has discussed how coming out as lesbian can be complicated by adoption. For Cain's sample of 14 participants, adoptive identity contributed to increased anxiety and fear when coming out; participants expressed concerns that they would lose their adoptive families when they came out, a fear exacerbated by their separation involuntarily from their birth families. Some participants, however, indicated that their adoptive identity was useful in that "it provided a template of being different that was helpful when coming out as lesbian."

appear to differ significantly, suggesting that they assumed that being-adopted would "cancel out" being-Māori, as per the assimilationist discourse of closed adoption.

Adoptive identity as resistance

A further facet of adoptive identity emerged from participant narratives, namely that of resistance towards, and rejection of oppressive identity categorisations. Lisa resisted the implication that it is her responsibility to resolve her differentness or marginality: "As I get older, I am either getting more awkward or becoming more aware of all the ways I don't quite fit, and I recognise it isn't me that's the problem, it's the expectations of what it means to be normal and ways I'm not, as a female, Pākehā or Māori, queer, not entirely neuro-typical, vegan and geeky, whatever. It's not for me to solve, but I am aware of it…"

Agreeing with Lisa about where the 'problem' of divergent identities lies, Emma chooses to evade some of the identity politics by identifying in a more universal way: "I see myself just as a human…I don't classify myself, but I know that other people classify me and that's fine. But then that's not actually about me, it's about them." Similarly to Emma, Rick spoke about resisting the urge to fall into divisions, instead opting for ways to come together: "I don't want to create separation. I don't want to create difference, I want to create sameness, I am the same as you, I was born in this way and I do this here. You just do it a bit different."

Emma and Rick's assertions of universalism or "sameness" could be read as avoidance or even denial of difference. However, their experiences of continual contestation around adoptively-produced differences and social identity categorisations instead suggest fatigue or 'saturation'; as with Lisa, an unwillingness to endure imposed categorisations and meanings rather than evading difference per se. Furthermore, Emma and Rick construct themselves outside of both dominant *and* strategically or politically important subaltern categorisations. They are acutely aware of the hegemonic potential of *any* imposed categorisation, refusing to 'fit' or comply, asserting their agency in the process. Emma suggests that it is precisely these experiences that place Māori adoptees in a unique position to see a way out of binary oppositions: "I honestly believe that people who are cross-culturally adopted are the future of New Zealand society as we have it today. I believe that those are the people who have the greatest insights into the theoretical problems and the practical problems that we have, and I believe that they have the potential to really cross divides." Here Emma is proclaiming the transformative potential of adoptive identity as a site and means of resistance, a positive re-rendering of this traditionally devalued position. This in some ways aligns with Homans (2007, 65) suggestion that the

'hole' of adoption may be identity-conferring rather than identity-depriving; the void or "blank" is not a nothingness, it is potential as yet unrealised.

The intersection of being-adopted and being-Māori

As is apparent in the quotes above, participants' being-Māori is inextricably intertwined with being-adopted. Participants at times wondered, and found it difficult to determine, what of their social identity challenges is about adoption, and what is about being-Māori. For instance, in thinking about the differing responses from Māori and Pākehā, Lisa drew the conclusion that much of the contestation around her Māori identity is related to Māori being a "heavily stereotyped" group in general:

> I think Māori have a better understanding of who Māori are, Pākehā are dealing with their stereotypes of who Māori are and who's authentic and who's not. Māori know that lots of Māori grow up in Pākehā families and all that stuff…There definitely are the people who are trying to prove themselves who react against me, I think that says something about how they feel as Māori as well, and a lot of this isn't so much about being adopted as being part of a really heavily stereotyped group… I've talked to enough of my Māori friends about that, and they don't feel Māori enough, that's not just about being adopted, it doesn't help though.

Even though Māori may draw broader boundaries of Māoriness based on their recognition of Māori heterogeneity, oppressive authenticity can nonetheless take effect. Lisa suggests that this is inherent to Māori identity; there are more criteria to meet, entailing additional scrutiny and 'enforcement' (Paradies 2006, 356), inside as much as outside te ao Māori.

Rick noted the need to declare his adoptive status, as explanation for the apparent disjuncture between his racialised appearance and his Pākehā surname. Given the history of adoption in Aotearoa New Zealand, citing adoption signposts Rick's connection to New Zealand European Whiteness: "When I applied at [place of employment] and rock up there as [Pākehā surname] coming, they don't expect to see a Māori coming out of there. So often people would say to me 'oh [Rick's surname]', I say 'no I'm adopted'. 'Oh'. So it comes up regularly when I'm introducing myself to other people, with my brother, I say I'm adopted. Because it doesn't make sense otherwise, from where I come from for people."

Adoptive status, even if not explicitly stated, was also useful in defusing a potentially volatile situation: "And I'm an engineer so…I end up in a workshop, nigger, black arse, one of the guys…he goes 'so you're one of those Māoris who's going to be doing all that fuckin Māori shit are you?' I went

'oh I'll probably be on your side dude', 'oh fuck that's good then'. So how do you deal with that? This is what we live in, this environment…you have to pick your fights and pick your battles." While Rick does not seem entirely comfortable with his position in this scenario, he has determined that it is the most prudent stance. While it does not say anything about who he is as Māori, or his deeply felt connection to that world, to enact himself as a majority New Zealander is the safer option.

In the latter example, in the presumably masculine, heteronormative, white context of the engineering workshop, Rick was immediately targeted for being-Māori. Thus, when visible or apparent to people (when adoptees have the phenotypical markers), being-Māori overshadows and outweighs being-adopted. As Natasha jokes, "well you don't really wear a sign do you?" Being-adopted is not immediately apparent, leading to race overshadowing adoptive status in the subjectification process.

Despite adoptionality signifying a connection to Whiteness, Natasha reported having encountered a different, less judgemental response from Māori due to the inclusiveness of whānau. However, Natasha did acknowledge that being adopted by a Māori father has made a difference to her identification and comfort in the Māori world. It may be that this has also influenced her acceptance by Māori, the fact that she has grown up with some connection: "…being adopted into Māori has made it a lot easier. If I was adopted into Pākehā I'm not sure I'd see myself as Māori. I'd really struggle to jump the bridge to make those connections…So luckily I was adopted and given tikanga."

Shane recounted an encounter in which he felt judged and somewhat stigmatised due to his adoptive status, in a Māori context:

> I was talking to this lady from *Tūhoe,*[103] and I mentioned that my koro was a [surname], and then she's like 'woah woah, cos there's a [surname] whānau in Tūhoe, it's really prominent, but it's a different line from ours'… but then I explained that I was adopted and brought up by Pākehā parents and this woman goes 'oh, oh that's sad', and I thought 'oh why did she say that?' and my guess is that would just probably be a completely foreign idea to someone from Tūhoe, and in some ways she was right and so those who have been brought up in those areas where whāngai has carried on, they don't quite comprehend [adoption], but neither do they speak up about it.

Shane's experience is consistent with examples shared by Kere, Jenny and Donna-Marie, in which their being-adopted was viewed negatively in a Māori context. The sense of being-adopted 'tainting'

[103] Tūhoe is the name for a tribal group of the Bay of Plenty

or spoiling being-Māori casts the intersection in a particular light, a very different relation to that of "additive". This did, however, vary according to context.

A Māori identity

Identifying as Māori

As in Shane's experience above, being-adopted is more likely to be revealed in Māori settings through the practices of mihimihi and whakawhanaungatanga. Adoptees have to make decisions about what to cite or claim and how, in their pepeha and mihimihi. Those who have Māori adoptive parents, Donna-Marie, Natasha and Sonya, choose to declare their adoptive parents' whakapapa as well as their birth whakapapa in mihimihi. Donna-Marie and Natasha both use the term whāngai to denote their adoptive whakapapa (and Natasha uses the term 'toto' or blood to distinguish her biological whakapapa) – however the term refers to a Māori customary practice that is markedly different from Western adoption, including in the sense that it is often practised within whānau or kin. The use of this term can therefore be misleading, implying a whakapapa connection to adoptive parent, and therefore retention of connection.

Claiming of adoptive or whāngai whakapapa is also problematic if overly rigid conventions are followed. Iwi vary in terms of the membership status they accord to adoptees and whāngai. Depending upon the iwi, it may not be perceived as tika for an adoptee to claim their adoptive parent's whakapapa. Traditionally, a *whāngai* child *would* be considered a legitimate member of the iwi and hapū, able to lay claim to their whāngai parents' whakapapa, however, this is not uniformly supported within modern-day iwi structures.[104] Sonya also considered that the standardisation of pepeha and citation of whakapapa in a simplistic format casts anything divergent (such as in the situation of adoptees) in a negative light. Thus, the complexity of adoptee identities and relationships can be challenging and confusing to those who are non-adopted, even within the more flexible structures of Māori society.

In contrast, Rachel finds mihimihi difficult, because she feels compelled sometimes to share her adoptive status even when she is uncomfortable doing so: "You kind of have to cos everyone's really interested, and that's the first way of connecting really isn't it? So I always do mihi to a certain point but if I'm in a setting where it's less informal, then I'll say a little bit less…but if anyone comes up to me and says 'oh so you're from up north, do you know such and such?' and that's when I start to fall to pieces and now I just say I wasn't brought up there without disclosing everything on myself."

[104] Who constitutes a "legal descendent" of an iwi is determined by that iwi in conjunction with the Crown, often in the course of Treaty of Waitangi settlements. In public law, legally adopted children are descendents and in tribal law they are not – the primary criterion is whakapapa (Gover 2010, 187).

A point apparent in this quote from Rachel is that of the operationalisation of whakapapa – it is most meaningful through the relationships that it establishes between people. While adoptees might learn of their whakapapa and satisfy this fundamental criterion of Māori identity, there is a 'hollowness' to this understanding. Being a known face (he kanohi kitea), actively relating to whanaunga is what gives whakapapa its depth and richness, the flesh to the bones. As Rachel notes, the lack of relationship revealed subsequent to her disclosure of her whakapapa in Māori settings, exposes her adoptive status, her adoptive 'lack' and vulnerability.

Feeling somewhat liminal, precarious and tenuous, participants were hypervigilant in Māori contexts, and would manage themselves carefully to avoid committing any cultural gaffes and being publicly humiliated. Jenny is acutely aware of her place on the cultural 'hierarchy', and is therefore careful to step back and defer to those with more knowledge and proficiency. For Lisa, being adopted to Pākehā parents is something that she tries to be very open about in order to not mislead others or misrepresent herself: "I give people an awful lot of information…I'm kind of misrepresenting myself if all I say is that I'm from Ngāi Tahu, and give my pepeha. I need to say that I did not grow up down there and I was raised entirely by Pākehā…I feel it's extremely important that first of all that my students know where I come from and that this stuff is learned for me, and second that I don't know, yeah I feel like it's extremely important that I don't misrepresent or try and pass."

Thus, Lisa takes care to represent herself openly and honestly, declaring her adoptive position. For Lisa honesty is the best policy in terms of taking care not to misrepresent self – this is the authenticity of self that she values above an oppressive cultural authenticity. However, as Lisa notes in the quote below, it is a struggle for many people to grasp the 'both/and' adoptive orientation or identity: "I think that it's too complicated for lots of people…you're Māori or you're Pākehā, and lots of people really struggle to sit with the fact that I'm very much both and if anything, I'm much more comfortable with *te ao Pākehā* (the Pākehā world) than I am in te ao Māori and, that doesn't take anything away from how I see myself as Māori, and I've had Māori friends tell me like you actually have to choose, you can't be both, which just sounds ridiculous to me." Lisa does not feel that her adoptive identity detracts from her being-Māori, but is aware that this goes against strategic essentialist imperatives.

Both/and or in-between?

The "both/and" identity or position that Lisa is subscribing to is one in which being more comfortable in the Pākehā world does not detract from being-Māori, and being-Māori need not be solely or exclusively Māori. However, the struggle of others to accept this position highlights the binary nature

of ethnic identities and the rigidity of associated categorisations, as noted by Natasha: "We like to be divisive at either one or t 'other. And I like the idea of being able to swing. Not quite being fully in the traditional, not quite being fully in the activism, but floating in-between…having been put in boxes all our lives, [I] don't want to recreate that in the environment, and I actually think Māori are really good at putting other Māori in boxes too."

Lisa accepts that her skin colour and looks may be construed as Pākehā by others, but finds a conception of what it means to be Māori based on skin colour as narrow and limiting: "I'm really aware that I totally pass as Pākehā. Like I know that I have pale skin and I don't make an effort to ever be what people expect Māori to be. I don't get annoyed when people get it wrong, but yeah it would be nice if people had a bigger idea of what Māori is."

Emma spoke of being-adopted-by-Pākehā and being-Māori in terms of an inner tension "which is slowly dissipating, but will always be there." Dean also felt a tension between the two polar opposite worlds that he is now a part of since reconnecting with his birth whānau: "I probably do [feel like I have a place to stand as Māori] in a sense but like I'm still in the middle and it's still difficult for me because you're going sort of one extreme to the other, so I do sort of struggle with that. I'll put down that I'm New Zealand Māori because I know that now. But yeah, maybe because we're not up there and as full on as what they are up there." Here, Dean notes the disjuncture between the world that his birth whānau live in in Northland, and the home that he returns to after each visit, closer to his adoptive family. His reference to "as full on" implies a difference in degree or extent of living-as-Māori, or more 'authentically'.

Both Lisa and Emma spoke about making their "in-betweenness" productive, by fulfilling a bridging or intermediary role between Māori and Pākehā. Lisa perceived her Māori-focused work as part of her obligation as Māori, but also somewhere where she can make a unique contribution as an adoptee:

> I see myself as having a responsibility to my whakapapa. And I know the most useful work I can do is translating ideas and issues, colonisation, for Pākehā…I try to make time for that kind of bridging work as much as I can. I see myself as stuck in between, and I might as well use that.
>
> Cross-cultural adoptees are in a curious position…and that is not a symptom of us, or our situation, that is a situation of society having these two really polar opposite identity tacks…My whole thing is to be able to bridge that gap, so I do Māori and Indigenous studies because my

> mum who adopted me is European and white and I want her to be able to have a cultural heritage in my, in our country. (Emma)

Participants' identification as Māori has occurred in a time where there are more favourable perceptions of Māori, post the renaissance and biculturalism of the late 1970s and 1980s. Daniel recognised this: "Well it's better now. I mean the pride of being Māori now has grown as I've grown up…from my childhood I suppose Māori were seen as being a bit bad or something. And you know, you're classified as a good Māori or a Māori." Without knowing his whakapapa, Daniel is limited to sharing that he has a Māori birth father, and declaring his Māori ethnicity. In such cases he cites himself as a "half-caste", both Māori and Pākehā.

The outer limits – positions that you can't occupy 'authentically' as a Māori adoptee

Growing up without Māori knowledge and lived experience has implications for the identity claims one can make. Participants noted that they could and do identify as Māori, but there are limits to the spaces or positions they feel they can legitimately occupy, on the basis of not having been brought up as Māori: "Yeah, I feel like I know who I am in real life but I know the spaces that I'm not going to take up, I know the spaces that I don't have the experience to hold, I guess I want to let people know that I know that as well." (Lisa)

Despite being brought up by her kuia with a depth of knowledge of the adoptive whānau whakapapa, Natasha's upbringing did not necessarily meet a strict definition of 'authentic' either. This had implications for her comfort in taking up particular positions or stances:

> …well I wasn't raised in a traditional way, so therefore I wasn't raised next to my nanny on the marae learning the *karanga* (call) or being the *ringawera* (kitchen worker) or whatever. I had none of that raising. Activism was really difficult within my whānau because they were actively colonising themselves…I knew that I couldn't belong in the native zone, authentic or whatever, I'd missed that *waka* (canoe) when I was little. But could I belong in the activist? No I couldn't, I haven't done the Māori land march walks, I haven't gone to a Māori occupation, I've supported in the background but how would I be challenged when I walk in there?

Paul identifies and is identified as Māori, but he is careful about the claims that he makes relating to his iwi affiliations. Paul takes the position that his whakapapa does not give him an entitlement to cite

it for his own purposes. In order to do so, he feels he would need to connect more deeply to his people; the benefits of whakapapa come with certain obligations.

Working-Māori

The understanding that whakapapa entails certain obligations and responsibilities has been taken to heart by several participants. Even where they have felt compromised in their authenticity as Māori by virtue of being-adopted, participants frequently took it upon themselves to contribute to the betterment of Māori people. Seven participants (Mere, Sonya, Lisa, Emma, Donna-Marie, Natasha, Rua) are employed in Māori-focused positions, and for a further two (Shane, Paul), their being Māori has a significant bearing on their work. Working in a dedicated Māori role is significant, demanding a level of identification, accountability and acceptance distinct from that of social identity – a Māori professional identity. It also suggests a level of accomplishment and proficiency that is recognised by others, as well as a conscious decision to identify very publicly as Māori, beyond the safe confines of self or whānau. The professional sphere enabled some participants to 'grow into' a publicly declared Māori identity, which carried some risk, but also significant personal reward. While Mere felt culturally unprepared when she began in her Māori-focused role, work provided the opportunity for mentoring from elders. Rua recognised that in order to do the best job possible and to "give back" to whānau, she must "give to [herself] too". Rua thereafter enrolled in te reo and Māori studies for personal and professional development.

Going 'home'

As mentioned in the Learning Whakapapa section, all of those participants who know their iwi whakapapa have found it important to travel back to their tribal areas, to see and experience the places that their ancestors lived in, and establish their own connection. There are layers of connections in the Māori world, and whakapapa is but one. Whakapapa provides an individual with a place and an identity within the familial and tribal groupings of their parent/s, as well as tūrangawaewae, the right of association with a locality, a place of belonging by right of birth (Mead 2003, 42-3). However, in terms of strength of claims to tūrangawaewae, whakapapa is superseded by the *ahi kā* (burning fire) principle; in other words, those who are present and maintain contact with their extended family and hapū, have the strongest connection and claim. Conversely, the connections of those who are absent for three or more generations would be thought of as unstable or extinguished (Toitū te Whenua 1959, 43). Thus, ahi kā represents the ultimate connection, and this was recognised by a number of participants.

Natasha talked about the concept of ahi kā specifically, but in terms of her adoptive father's whakapapa. She lived in *Te Waipounamu* (the South Island) for a year to "open a door" for her boys to also be comfortable there. "I walk on Moeraki, I walk on Uenuku, I am comfortable, but I'm also alone because the connection is just a little bit far." However, although Natasha is at home with her adoptive father's iwi – this is her "strongest iwi identity" and what she considers her tūrangawaewae – the lack of blood connection does create some distance. The lands of Natasha's birth whakapapa, on the other hand, appear to exert less of a pull; Natasha seems satisfied that her birth siblings maintain those connections, and that she will be granted access as she finds the time and energy.

In Lisa's case, the death of a relative who maintained ahi kā for the family, has made that reconnection more difficult. Where immediate birth whānau no longer reside in their tribal *rohe* (area), the adoptee cannot depend on them for ahi kā. They must then develop new relationships, sometimes independently of birth parents, and over a considerable geographical distance. As Lisa notes, this may not be particularly easy: "[Going 'home] was really important to me except that I've reconciled myself to the fact that I probably won't… it is important to me to be present down south, to be known to my whānau and that totally hasn't happened and I can't see it happening, and that makes me sad…I definitely want to rekindle that connection, that's something that I feel quite strongly, and yet I'm not doing very much about it…"

Dean is fortunate that a significant number of whānau still reside in the tribal rohe, including his uncle in a kaumātua role. Dean and his boys have forged a connection there, giving them the ability to visit on a regular basis. While this has given Dean a sense of tūrangawaewae, he nonetheless feels the same connection to the place in which he was raised: "…this is my mountain, this is my river, you're told about that basically as soon as we went up there...do I associate myself as being part of it, yes [I] do…But I think of down south and that as well, we've got the Mataura River down south, we've got the Hokonui hills, the same sort of thing." Similarly, Rua has whānau who maintain ahi kā in her various tribal rohe, but as a result of her adoption, she does not feel at home in any single location: "I don't truly know where home is…I don't envision just one place as a home. I envision land as a home…my thing is connecting back to the whenua more than anything."

Even where ahi kā has been extinguished, it can be re-established by returning to live in a tribal area. Because of its significance as level of connection, going home to tribal areas represents 'the final frontier' of Māori identity. It is one step that many Māori adoptees do not manage to take. After the magnitude of meeting and becoming reacquainted with birth whānau, ongoing struggles with pan-Māori and iwi identity, the possible disconnection of their own birth whānau to traditional homelands and iwi, and not to mention logistic considerations of distance and uprooting occupation and family in order to return, this may seem an insurmountable task. While many will travel to their homelands as

visitors, very few will establish ahi kā for themselves. There may be some regret associated with this, or likely resignation.

The notion of "roots trips" and "return journeys" are discussed in transnational adoption literature, in which the idea of a 'natural' belonging to another person or place is contested (Yngvesson 2003, 27; Howell 2006, 115). The search for roots or origins assumes a past and a 'ground' that is in information, a place or a person, as well as a certain relation between that and the present, and identity. The present is collapsed into the past, and the origins constitute identity. Yngvesson (2003, 32) suggests instead that a process of "reinhabiting" involves reconciling the past with the present, and piecing a ground together. Thus, returning "home" may constitute a *creative process* of meaning-making and narrative, more than a quest of discovery. This is not to negate the importance of the return, but to appreciate what it *actually* offers: revision rather than restoration or resolution (Honig 2005, 216; Homans 2007, 66). Observations of transnational adoptees taking these journeys are that they result in a "shaking up" of identity, a loss of bearings ("discovery of both familiar and strange, a 'me' and 'not me'": Yngvesson 2003, 27) and opening rather than closure (Homans 2007, 66).

Where adoptees are moved to "find some ground, some place, some position on which to stand" (Hall 1997b, 52), tūrangawaewae is literally that. While participants' return trips to their tūrangawaewae do not have the same 'foreign-ness' that transracial international adoptees might experience, in some cases participants noted the stark contrast between the Pākehā-dominated urban environments in which they live and have grown up, and the largely Māori rural areas of their ancestral origins. A return journey may serve to highlight adoptive differences, as well as reinforce losses. Tūrangawaewae symbolised a potentially rich repository and source of culture, tradition and authenticity to which adoptees could return, with their families. However, opening up relationships with the *hau kāinga* (home people) also entailed meeting obligations, giving time as well as taking in what was needed or desired. Participants did not necessarily find a "home" to reside in, nor realise ahi kā, but the yield was significant nonetheless – a sense of belonging, relationships with whanaunga and whenua, an ability to claim connection and increased knowledge and understanding.

Pierce (2017, 58) is emphatic that adoptees must "return" – to not return, to disappear is to accept settler logics and practices of "Native erasure." But returning how and in what way? Pierce suggests exactly what participants in this research have come to exemplify through their paradoxically essentialist stance; a refusal of settler-imposed and strategic conceptions of essence and "identitarian individuation,"[105] and engagement in processes of communal, reciprocal belonging. By becoming

[105] Where identitarian refers to the politics based on social identity, and individuation is the process by which an individual becomes distinct from others, identitarian individuation resembles strategic essentialism, but with a more individualistic focus.

multiple and collective, indigenous adoptees may realise a "breadth of authentic possibilities," or "authenticities" (Pierce 2017, 59, 62, 72). The trajectories of identity that Māori adoptee participants have followed are considered paradoxically essentialist, ambivalent and contradictory *precisely because* they disobey hegemonic discourses. Their experiences and stories tell us something about how and why dominant discourses of identity and adoption need to change.

Whaka-papa kōrero

The final section of this chapter returns to the notion of whakapapa, but in its meanings as a verb rather than a noun. The prefix "whaka" means to cause something to happen or be; or to become. "Papa" refers to a base, foundation or layer, and so taken together, *whaka-papa* can entail layering one thing upon another, or becoming earth (Mika 2014, 53). For Māori adoptees, practising whaka-papa refers to the grounding of and making oneself 'real' through a consolidated biological connection, as well as creating and reconstructing foundations. Through the stages and processes of "being-adopted-and-Māori", "becoming bio-genealogical" through reconnection with birth whānau, and "emerging" as partners, parents, learners and workers, Māori adoptees have continued to consolidate themselves, and their foundations. Particular meanings of adoptive and Māori identity have also emerged, around the key concepts of exploration, commitment and integration.

Adoptive identity is an assigned property as a result of participants' involuntary positioning as adoptees. There is no choice in being-adopted, which means that adoptive identity just *is* – one is always-adopted and somewhat marginalised as a result. For participants in this research, adoptive identity entails enduring and multiple tensions as well as pressure to achieve integration – coordination, alignment and coherence of complex aspects of the self (Syed and McLean 2016, 110). Participants were compelled to address in some way the 'rupture' of adoption, and their non-bionormativity. There was no simple or easy resolution. Not fitting entirely in one place or in a particular (uni)form, participants instead advocated for acceptance of their disparate parts and contradictions, and resistance against crude binary categorisations.

In contrast, Māori identity was something that participants had to make a commitment to. Although being-Māori was not a matter of choice for participants, the need to make decisions about what to claim, how and when, was. The intersection with their being-adopted was critical here – exposing them as inauthentic and culturally compromised if declared. Participants found what was comfortable, of openness or non-disclosure, through active exploration. Standing behind their identity claims involved taking action – searching for whakapapa, forging kinship, reculturation and 'acting' in public spheres. Nevertheless, participants became aware that some subject positions were off-limits

to them, infeasible or unachievable given their being-adopted-and-Māori. They had discovered the limits but also the possibilities of their Māori-adoptive identities.

In whaka-papa there is continual and constant movement (Mika 2014, 54). The identities that participants subscribed to at the conclusion of their interview narratives will undoubtedly shift and change, never reaching a form of finality. The whaka-papa kōrero of participants demonstrate this, but also the importance of an enduring core – that of personal identity, adoptive and Māori, derived from non-biological nurture as well as discoveries unearthed in reunion. Fundamental or primary layers provide the base for new social identity layers, also adoptive and Māori. This process of becoming, in which identities are embedded, is ever-changing but also (multi)directional. Transitioning through Te Kore, Te Pō and Te Whaiao towards Te Ao Mārama, Māori adoptees are engaged in a creative and constructive dialectic between origin and destination, return and progression.

Te ao rapu, ko te huripoki e huri nei, i runga i te taumata o te kaha.
The world that moves forward to the place it came from, upon the summit of strength

Chapter Eleven:
Discussion

This study sought to answer two interrelated research questions. The first involved a broad-based inquiry into a relatively under-researched area, that of Māori adoptees' lived experiences of being adopted and Māori in the context of closed stranger adoption. Analysing participants' narrated experiences allowed me to address a second question, namely, what these experiences between 'nature' and 'culture', "roots and routes", generate in terms of new understandings about the concept of identity. In this final chapter I will privilege the second research question, by reflecting on the aspects of participants' experiences that relate more directly to identity.

Adoption and identity are widely researched topics, and the intersection has been well-explored in particular disciplines. The social constructionist notion that identity is subject to broader social, historical and cultural forces (Burr 2015, 2-4) is now widely accepted across psychologically as well as sociologically-oriented adoption research. Importantly, this acknowledgement allows for considerations of discourse, structure and temporality to balance an earlier focus on individual properties, agency and stability. However, the relative significance of these considerations are contested. Some perspectives perceive a simple correspondence of identity with substance, as definable, discoverable individual-bound essences reflecting biological 'reality', while others think of identity as a fleeting product of multiple and opposing discourses, wholly constructed outside of the person, contingent and without foundation (Burr 2015, 26, 122; Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 8).

These competing positions constitute hegemonic and counter-hegemonic or critical identity discourses respectively, both problematic in different ways for transracial adoptees. Growing up without access to biological origins and raised by non-biological kin, these divergent discourses construct transracial adoptees as lacking or compromised in terms of their biological and racial/ethnic/cultural identities, or as anti-essentialist 'ambassadors' expected to transcend identity 'politics' altogether (Wills 2016, 207). For transracial adoptees generally, and Māori adoptee participants in this study in particular, the *experience* of identity falls somewhere in the middle of these discourses and binary positions. This will be outlined in the following sections, in which the higher level implications will be drawn from participants' experiences of "being-adopted-and-Māori", "becoming bio-genealogical" and "emerging beyond adoptive and birth families."

Being-adopted-and-Māori is significantly discursively produced

The stigma and pathology of adoptive differentness

Drawing on a post-positivist realist approach to identity, it was argued in Chapter Two that the particular perspectives of and discourses pertaining to adoption and race in Aotearoa New Zealand position Māori adoptees in particular ways, as well as frame or shape their lived experiences. The effects of bionormative discourses were cited throughout participants' narratives, most fundamentally in participants' thinking of themselves as always and irredeemably different because of their lack of biological connection and knowledge of their genealogical origins. In the context of their adoptive families, this adoptive difference was not necessarily problematic; twelve participants reported positive and loving relationships with adoptive kin that engendered feelings of belonging and security. For many of these participants, their adoptive parents drew on well-established adoption narratives to describe them as "chosen children", and to code their difference as "special". For three participants however, their adoptive difference was treated as an inferior or tenuous relation that justified charity rather than love in one case, or permitted sexual abuse in two others.

Outside of the adoptive family, participants' being-adopted was cast in a more negative light, subject to bionormative microaggressions. Intrusive questioning, queries about 'real' parents, comments about being lucky and rescued, or derogatory name-calling ("bastards") made their "differentness" a pathological "otherness", resulting in feelings of anger and shame. Despite the renouncement of illegitimacy as a social concern (O'Neill et al. 1976, 398), the stigma of adoption was reproduced in everyday discourse, giving rise to a socially devalued and stigmatised adoptive identity (Clark-Miller 2005, 48). For some participants, these messages were deeply internalised. The implied dysfunctional birth origins and their relinquishment said something about their value or worth. Furthermore, the expectation that adoptees ought to be grateful for their adoption did not sit well with several participants – denying the 'reality' of their experiences of loss, and invalidating their emotional responses.

That adoptive difference matters was in direct contrast to what many participants were told growing up – adoptive families appeared to adhere to the "as if biological" prescription, not necessarily denying adoptive difference, but downplaying its perceived inferiority compared to biological kinship and emphasising primarily positive meanings. The "grateful adoptee" construction identified in several participants' narratives served to support this discursive negation by pathologising any other narrative or subject position. Shane and Rachel in particular shared examples of having been pathologised by others for a "neurotic subjectivity" (Rudy 2019, 206). Shane felt compelled to search for a scientific or 'real' basis for his feelings of grief and loss, reflecting the lack of validity accorded to his lived

experience. Several participants refuted the "broken or misfit adoptee" (Donna-Marie), some having undertaken therapeutic work, or having developed a perspective that enabled them to re-locate the problems of adoption to the social domain.

Paradoxical adopted subjects

Dominant discourses by their very nature are normalised, subsequently taken for granted and less visible – leaving hegemonic ideologies and structural relations to go unnoticed and remain intact (Janks 1997, 338, 341). The discursive forces at play in adoption were not often made explicit in participant accounts, but their presence and effects through identifiable narrative tropes (such as those discussed above) were. Participants rejected or resisted the pathologising constructions of adoptees, but in most cases accepted and aspired to a bionormative identity ideal. Meeting birth whānau and learning about birth origins and genealogy promised self-understanding and a rooted, grounded identity, something that all participants expressed a desire for. Much to the disappointment of adoption scholars such as Latchford (2019) and Haslanger (2012), who argue for a complete rejection of biocentrism, this pattern has also been observed in other research involving adoptees (for example, Beauchesne 1997). The seemingly contradictory position, described by Wills (2016) as paradoxical essentialism, is a natural consequence of grappling with contradictory discourses (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 83; Singley 2018, 51) rather than being a problem *of* adoptees themselves. Indeed, the striking similarity of transracial adoptee accounts in the literature gives a sense that broader forces and practices common across western (colonial) societies, structure a particular adoption experience.[106]

In the course of my research, I have come to appreciate that even the most deeply or internally felt aspects of adoption, may be subject to external influences. For example, as an adoptee I had considered the internalised rejection of relinquishment as predominantly intra-psychic. However, to read that this is a common pattern of response as well as hear it in the narratives of participants, led me to consider the importance of socio-cultural meanings (what it *means* to be relinquished by your biological parent) in shaping these affective aspects of experience. Of course, this is not to say that there is not variation in how adoptees respond to that experience. Experience is mediated by what is happening within the individual, as well as outside (McNeill 2010, 58), informing a particular positionality. Variation in positionality was also observed among participants in this study.

The range of adoptee responses in terms of adoptive positioning and identity appear as either a turning away from or towards extant discourses, partial or complete. Contradiction or ambivalence

[106] It is important to make clear that this literature only includes those adoptees who have been willing to participate in research. There is recognition that the experiences of those who do not do so, and do not search for birth origins, will not be captured or necessarily well understood (Howe and Feast 2000, 24).

may arise from adoptees exercising agency, while being subject to or constrained by the discourses and subject positions available to them (Janks 1997, 341; Dorow 2006, 3; Wegar 1992, 97). Furthermore, the values and norms relating to family, belonging and identity upheld through adoption discourse *also matter* to adoptees, thereby rendering resistance to bionormativity all the more difficult.

What appears as paradoxical within a (supposedly) postcolonial and "postbiocentric climate" (Rudy 2019, 212) is not so within Māori understandings. Māori are well-practiced in resisting deficit colonial constructions of "Māoriness" while asserting the legitimacy of biologically and culturally-based constructions. While this is a form of strategic essentialism that, by virtue of their upbringing outside of the Māori world, Māori adoptees cannot claim, primordial notions based on whakapapa were a mode of being-Māori that Māori adoptees *could* claim. On the basis that whakapapa is both metaphysical construct and fundamental to Māori personhood and identity, participants were compelled to search for and know their biological heritage. All participants recounted their lack of knowledge of whakapapa and their inability to participate in the Māori world without it as fraught and difficult. This state of being was likened to teetering on the edge of an "abyss" or a "black hole", an emptiness or blankness, or without direction or connection. Learning whakapapa was therefore of tremendous significance for Māori identity and belonging – a key identity resource.

In this research, an additional paradox that participants faced was that of whakapapa being all, but also not enough. Akin to the unexpected "work" of post-reunion biological kinship, participants found that possessing genealogy without kinship meant they were still without the relationships and connections that constitute whakapapa in its fullest sense. The paradox here is not of whakapapa itself, but the expectations set in the adoptee's mind regarding what it will mean for their whakapapa to be revealed to them, in terms of identity, belonging, kinship and group membership. Where a lack of biological knowledge has positioned the adoptee outside of biocentric norms, their biological heritage in the form of whakapapa Māori, takes on an additional significance – the key to their belonging and identity as Māori. Without socialisation in the Māori world, adoptees may interpret whakapapa in accordance with the narrow, legal definition of Māori that specifies only descent from a Māori ancestor. However, whakapapa has a more holistic meaning that adoptees may not yet appreciate – that of relationships built around biological relatedness (O'Carroll 2013, 5). To use the language of Howell (2006, 8), the Māori adoptee has been "de-kinned" and is then "re-kinned" or brought into a permanent relationship with strangers through closed adoption, through law and then nurture. Despite being of Māori descent, they must go through a process of "kinning" in the Māori world in order to realise the meaning of whakapapa in full.

If anything, biology is *more* fundamental to Māori conceptions of whakapapa and identity and yet this is simultaneously inadequate or insufficient on its own. The realisation that learning

whakapapa does not alleviate adoptive differentness led some participants to form a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards identifying as Māori – rejecting a pan-Māori ethnic identity while embracing whānau membership and/or an ancestry-based naturalistic spirituality. This experience of "becoming bio-genealogical" is similar to those cited by indigenous and transracial adoptees. Never fully achieving a "simple, essential correspondence" of biology and culture that notions of authenticity rely on (Homans 2013, 193), participants found that their race-kinship incongruity endured rather than resolved post-reunion.

Discourse accounts significantly for adoptees' lived experiences of being adopted. As is apparent in Table 7 below, the feelings of difference, the loss associated with not knowing biological origins, and the struggle against being pathologised for the emotional sequelae can all be linked to the underpinning ideologies of adoption, and how it was practiced. In other words, the attempt to, but failure of, adoption to prevent adoptive differentiation, has wholly structured and constructed the adoptee experience.

Table 7: Adoptee experiences arising from the institution and practice of closed stranger adoption

CLOSED STRANGER ADOPTION Response to stigma of illegitimacy and infertility – shaping non-biologically related infertile parents and illegitimate children into a heteronormative (white) nuclear family (reifying and reproducing); avoiding difference or potentially dangerous 'otherness' (Diver, 2014)			
Maintained/upheld through:		**Norms/discourses**	**Adoptee response**
Secrecy	• Birth mother's pregnancy • Sometimes adoption itself	• Shame of illegitimacy and pre-marital sexual relations • 'Bad blood'/'bad seed'	• Shame
Creation of legal fiction (erasure of illegitimacy, prescription of adoptive identity)	• Legally constructed 'as if biological' family • Issuing of adoptive birth certificate • Sealing of birth records	• Heteronormative (white) nuclear biologically-related is the ideal family form • Adoption as charitable and altruistic	• Desire for 'natural' origins • Need to know
Entrance/ family narratives	• Telling rescue or 'chosen child' story • Storying origins in a particular way • BUT resemblance talk	• Adoption as charitable and altruistic – 'rescue', 'lucky' • Grateful adoptee • A biological/natural family resembles each other	• Contrary to 'natural origins' *and therefore different* • Burden of specialness and 'chosen' • Relinquishment as being 'unchosen' • Wanting to belong • Social disenfranchisement, loss
Minimising/ denial of difference	• Matching • Rhetoric of environmental supremacy/ nurture • Pathologising of search	• A biological/ natural family resembles each other; difference is unnatural • The adoptive family is no different from a biological family • Realness = sameness • Babies as blank slates • Ungrateful/bad/ disloyal/self-centred adoptee for wanting to know • Pathology of the adoptee	• Nature *does* matter • Desire for belonging • Imagining feeling of difference? What is real? What is nature, what is nurture? Am I the problem? • Accepting or not accepting? • Feeling need to justify need to know

Transracial adoption adds other layers of discourse for adoptees to contend with – namely, race/racialisation/racism and colonialism. There are important parallels between colonialism and closed stranger adoption; in many ways closed stranger adoption reproduces settler colonialism. Both

are technologies of assimilation, and employ similar strategies to maintain or uphold the dominant status quo. The pathology is centred in the colonised and/or adopted subject (as demonstrated further in the thesis, Table 8, 252). The intersection of colonialism and adoption has the effect of amplifying these discursive forces.

Changes to adoption practice were achieved by the co-option of elements of adoption discourse by adoptees and their allies. Invoking the logic of biocentrism, adoption activists in the 1970s and 1980s argued for knowledge of biological origins as a fundamental human right, a normal and understandable interest rather than pathological preoccupation. More recently, "genealogical bewilderment", which emphasises an individual response, has been reframed as "origin deprivation" to more adequately highlight the systemic and normative denial of access to genetic kinship (Diver 2014, 50, 68). Where some decry these movements for reifying wounded and broken narratives (Volkman 2005, 97), they nonetheless illustrate the ways in which adoptees have moved from being "objects of discourse" to more agential "subjects in their own discourse" (Wills 2016, 203). For Māori adoptees, indigenous discourses place a value on biological connection that validates rather than pathologises their quest for origins. However, the very holism that enables on the one hand, demands more of the Māori adoptee subject on the other, their kinship as well as their biology. Relationships must be built and connections must be nurtured, disruptions and interruptions repaired. Thereafter, less sympathetic strategic essentialist discourses of cultural authenticity herald a further discursive frontier for the Māori adoptee to navigate in their process of becoming.

Identity is an ontological project

As part of the realisation that the phenomena of adoption and identity cannot be divorced from discourse, it became apparent that the lived experiences of being-adopted-and-Māori and the 'quest' that Māori adoptee participants are engaged in is somewhat more expansive than discrete components such as adoptive identity, ethnic identity or cultural identity. It was clear from participants' narratives that adoption affects their very being-in-the-world, and coming to terms with this is an ontological endeavour.

As noted in Chapter Eight, one of the "ultimate concerns" that emerged from participants' texts was that of realness. In her research with adult adoptees, Modell (1994, ix) noted that the dichotomy of real and fictive (or "not real") pervaded their everyday experiences. "The dichotomy is not an abstraction or a theoretical point, but an aspect of daily interaction, manifested in [a] variety of ways…", including pondering and reinterpreting what makes a 'real' kinship relationship, and searching for 'real' rather than contrived resemblances, family trees and birth stories. In terms of their

realness, existing in fact or substance, participants could only verify this through their physical bodies and their embodied and felt experiences. Without biological connection, they could not verify their origins from an identifiable person or heritage; without knowledge of whakapapa, they could not connect themselves back to the whenua. Participants reported feeling un-real in terms of alien or "floaty" as a result of their roots having been "ripped out" of their original home-ground. Adoption discourses of environmental supremacy that privileged or denied the contribution of biological heritage were vehemently contested by some participants; drawing on the proverbial apple falling from the tree, Rick asked "since when did the apple tell the tree what to do?" From his perspective, to not acknowledge the biological 'source' was absurd – biology is substrate, foundational and fundamental. Lisa, Jenny and Donna-Marie also spoke up against the view of babies as "blank slates", arguing from their own contrary experiences as adoptees and/or parents. On this basis, to not know those biological origins was to not know your "real" self. Comments to this effect were made by Daniel and Rachel; the "real" parts or their "true essence" were those attributes that they could identify as inherited from biological relatives rather than something that had developed in their adoptive contexts. Identifying likenesses or resemblances with biological relations were a significant part of participants' identity work, and 'nature/nurture' a powerful means by which they could become more 'real' (Callahan 2011, 15-16).

The implicit messages in closed adoption that the adoptee's pre-adoptive history, ancestry and experience was irrelevant (Myers 2009, 111-2) and their adoptive difference of no consequence, contradicted the biocentric norms and ideologies of wider society that participants had been exposed to, and what they *knew* to be true: "In any event, it still seems that, however unspoken or subtle, in the nuances of language and informal social exchange, adoption is marked as difference'" (Melosh 2002b, 2). This disavowal of adoptees' 'reality' could be fundamentally confusing and deeply disorienting, producing ontological or existential angst – what is real or true? Is my experience of difference imagined? Do I have a grip on 'reality'?[107] The construction of the pathological, neurotic adoptee serves to compound such doubts.

Finding comfort in being-adopted-and-Māori

These feelings of 'unrealness' growing up adopted and Māori are a form of ontological insecurity – participants' non-acceptance of the reality or existence of themselves, at a fundamental level (Hewitt 2010, 511). For most participants, the security and trust engendered in their loving adoptive

[107] For an excellent discussion of contested adoptee subjectivities akin to ontological concerns, see Rudy (2019, 208-9).

circumstances mitigated some of the destabilising effects of their unknown biological connections, however, instability, change or abuse in the adoptive context amplified the sense of insecurity for some. Participants spoke of their ontological insecurity in terms of being "not comfortable" or "uncomfortable." Rick spoke of not ever being comfortable in his adoptive situation, because of the hidden abuse that he was subject to. Most often, participants reported feeling uncomfortable in the Māori world, the disjuncture revealed between their self-presentation or 'performance' in terms of cultural capability or knowledge and their being (Holliday 1999, 481). There was a desire to close this gap, to fit or belong, and to be recognised as rightfully existing there (Noble 2005, 114). Thus, while the word comfort suggests wellbeing and satisfaction, it also implies an ease and easiness (McNeill 2010, 58) at odds with adoptees' constant concern for their positioning and identity in a bionormative world. Rick attained a level of comfort through his connection with ancestral landmarks and ancestors, a connection that he "did not have to fight for." Shane and Natasha similarly narrated *moments* of ontological security – a deep peace or calm, and good feeling respectively – associated with their reconnection with birth siblings, land and ancestors. While all participants sought a feeling of 'home-ness', some had resigned themselves to the fact that this might be momentary rather than enduring.

The relationship between ontological security and identity is bi-directional: ontological security is deemed an important foundation for a stable and continuous sense of self-identity as well as social agency (Hewitt 2010, 511; Noble 2005, 113); and social identity recognition provides a level of comfort (McNeill 2010, 59). For participants, becoming bio-genealogical, either through meeting birth family members, confirming whakapapa and descent from a whānau, or creating a family of one's own, was critical in establishing realness and laying down roots in the world, strengthening both ontological security and personal identity. Achieving a Māori social identity was less certain, subject to the acknowledgements of other actors (Noble 2005, 114; Beech, MacIntosh and McInnes 2008, 963) and also participants' comfort levels. Several participants acknowledged their greater level of comfort in their adoptive families and in the Pākehā world, owing to their socialisation in dominant culture, and the associated privileges. Furthermore, some noted their ability to "pass" as Pākehā due to their 'ambiguous' appearance. It was inevitable then that to achieve 'realness' and be reunited with birth family and origins was always going to entail some discomfort, even in the pursuit of its assuagement. Finding the 'sweet spot' was part of participants' explorations of becoming and emerging as bio-genealogical beings, and their "identity work."

Adoption affects adoptees at a fundamental, ontological level. "The struggle *is* real", to cite a popular phrase. Identity does not constitute the whole of the Māori adoptee's struggle, but to suggest that it is only the end product would seem to underestimate its significance. According to a post-positivist realist understanding, identity is an embedded construct, emergent from consciousness, self,

position, subjectivity and positionality (Sanchez 2006, 38-9). As is evident from participants' accounts of their experiences, identity unfolds within, around and in-between each of these constructs, which vary in their constitution by structure and/or interior interactions with these structures (McNeill 2010, 58). A clear distinction can be drawn between personal and social identity, with different aspects of the adoptee journey and different forms of "identity work" – reunion, reconnection, return, reculturation or reclamation – contributing to these in different ways. Whakapapa is fundamental at an ontological and personal identity level, whereas kinship and cultural immersion experiences and capacities contribute more to social identity. Only some of this work is within the direct control of adopted individuals. What this means is that our focus on identity must be more than "the handling of an autonomous self" (Howell 2006, 133) if we are to extend the capacity to be 'comfortable' to all.

A Māori adoptee's identity work is never done

The processual and social dimensions of identity mean that the title of this section in fact applies to all people. As human beings, we are more or less continually engaged in "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, 1165). As the findings from participants' narratives demonstrated, identity work was considerable, ongoing, and it changed over time.

In accordance with the post positivist realist understanding of identity, personal identity seemed well-established at the point that participants met their birth parents or birth family members. Participants had a sense of themselves as continuous beings with particular characteristics, albeit without important information relating to biological origins. Participants were more disadvantaged by their lack of verifiable whakapapa, which meant their sense of themselves as Māori was limited to the information that had been relayed by authorities and adoptive parents, and the understanding of this in non-Māori terms. Three exceptions to this were found in the experiences of Natasha, Donna-Marie and Sonya, who each had a Māori adoptive parent. Growing up with a Māori understanding of whakapapa, and an adoptive whakapapa to connect to, provided some 'scaffolding' to their developing Māori identity. Subsequently, Sonya, Natasha and Donna-Marie were less likely to think of themselves as compromised in their identity as Māori, compared to other participants.

Despite a tendency for Māori identity to be framed as more of a social identity (West 2012, Nikora 2007), participants' narratives demonstrated that being-Māori had just as much bearing on the personal identity of participants. In the absence of known whakapapa, and connections to te ao Māori, the importance of being-Māori was emphasised as "primordial and ever-present" (Gonzalez 2010, 27), and constructed around participants' bodies – their blood, looks and feelings. In contrast to the

primordial iwi and tribal identities that emerged in the 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand however (Barcham 2000, 138), primordial Māori adoptee identities do not reinforce a politics of exclusion and marginalisation; they are rather, the products of such processes. Growing up adopted-and-Māori, participants' bodies were the only material resource available to them, to validate their being-Māori.

Similarly to the findings of Haenga Collins (2011), Newman (2011) and West (2012), a significant focus of identity work for Māori adoptees in this study was based in or on the Māori identity site. Much of this work involved mitigating or dealing with the effects of being-adopted upon being-Māori, explaining a way of being or belonging that did not necessarily fit with the available subject positions of either 'authentic indigene' or 'detribalised colonised subject.'[108] While Māori adoptees understand their socialisation in the Pākehā world away from "flax roots"[109] constrains their ability to occupy the former position, the same circumstances position them outside of the urbanised Māori population, who came to signify the latter.[110] Participants' simultaneously primordial and contested Māori identities led to a degree of ambivalence among some. This was most pronounced with regards to the pan-Māori or Māori ethnic identity; Kere, Rick, Shane and Emma perceived limited value in such an identification. This may be attributed to the perceived balance of identity risks to resources, informed by experiences in which both Māori and Pākehā had challenged their authenticity and legitimacy. With fewer resources with which to establish or maintain an 'authentic' Māori ethnic or cultural identity position (for example, status or standing in Māori communities, the ability to use and make pronouncements, acknowledged skill or expertise, ability to position self in, and influence, networks: Beech et al. 2008, 964-5), the risks of exposure, humiliation, rejection, remaining unrecognised, or negative reflected appraisals, were considerable. Similarly to other transracial adoptees (Samuels 2010, 26) participants claimed Māoriness racially (by descent) but not culturally, whilst pursuing authentic kinship via whānau or supportive peer groups, and *learning* to be Māori. In this way, participants were engaged in *whaka-papa* – laying the foundations upon which they could stake a larger or more secure claim with regards to being-Māori. There was an ebb and flow to this identity work; sometimes participants felt energised about embarking on further search or exploration, and at other times they sought respite, reverting to a more comfortable position for a period (i.e. their adopted or 'white' cultural identity: Walton 2015, 406), before the next 'burst'. Several participants

[108] These Māori identity binaries emerged from different points in time. Detribalisation occurred as part of urbanisation post World War II, and resistance to this in the 1970s and 1980s advanced a *Māori* cultural renaissance. Retribalisation followed in the 1990s, and was correlated with an *iwi* cultural renaissance (Gonzalez 2010, 27).
[109] The term "flax roots" is modelled on the term "grass roots", applied to Māori people and context. Its meaning is thus "ordinary Māori people in society or an organisation" (Stevenson 2015).
[110] Paradies (2006, 358) discusses the development of indigenous "solidarity grounded in a common experience of subordination." Māori adoptees often times (but not always), through their adoption into Pākehā middle-class families, found themselves outside of this subordinated reality.

(Jenny, Kere, Rachel, Shane) noted that this type of self-work was taxing, resource-intensive and never-ending.

"So what's your story?" Identity work through narrative

A clear account of identity as never finished, always in progress and process was apparent in participants' narratives and their being, becoming and emerging. While goals of integrating, unifying and resolving adoptive and Māori identity concerns or issues remained, these shifted from the forefront to the background as participants also spoke of 'letting go' and accepting themselves (see also Walton 2015, 410). These shifts are likely a reflection of participants' life stage and developmental trajectory, as well as their realisations that becoming bio-genealogical did not necessarily entail the decisive conclusion to their adoption story that they might have anticipated.

The identity gains promised by dominant search narratives were not automatically realised through the moment of reunion; rather, time, engagement and cognitive and *narrative processing* were required. Some participants were explicit regarding their narrativisation, and others less so. Due to the singular interview format, I had only one narrative from one point in time to draw from for most participants, meaning that I was limited in my ability to observe changes in narrative as a result of key events such as reunion. Unless a participant noted changes in their narrative at points in time explicitly, there was the possibility that what I was hearing was an experiential account previously re/narrativised for coherence and consistency, and then re-told, thus obscuring the role of the narrator. Rick in particular noted the 'well-rehearsed' nature of parts of his story, which he had constructed in therapy. Others, such as Shane, had expended considerable time and energy in constructing their origin narratives, but were nonetheless telling some parts for the first time in the interview, leaving the possibility that the narrative workings would be shown. Some participants' narratives appeared less coherent, or less well worked through – perhaps evidence of narrative sense-making 'in the moment'? These observations demonstrate two things: firstly, that the need for a coherent narrative and narrative identity may vary among individuals, and secondly, that coherent and consistent narratives require narrative work (Crossley 2000, 50).

Contact with two participants post-interview provided some evidence of narrative shifts. Ongoing collegial contact with Mere meant that we had two further conversations several years apart that touched on her adoption experience. Both revealed some striking changes to narrative, with implications for identity. The first involved "redemptive suffering" (Stone 2016, 957) that encapsulated Mere's coming to terms with the childhood abuse she experienced, the notion that perhaps it "had to happen" in order to produce the person she is today. The second involved Mere's

realisation that she needed to try to understand and forgive her birth mother for the decision to give her up for adoption, in order to move on from that hurt. The fact that these changes to narrative occurred aside from adoption-specific developments – in the course of everyday life, watching a poignant movie in the second instance – highlights the pervasiveness of adoption as an important reference point for ongoing narrative construction.

Similarly, catching up with Lisa later as she provided feedback on her interview transcript, she reflected that her perspective of her experience had changed considerably in the time since, related in part to the disclosure of a significant piece of information that shed a new light on her adoptive family relationships, and also, the meaning of her adoption. In contrast to Mere's 'everyday' narrative shifts noted above, Lisa's was a response to a specific event of considerable magnitude. This demonstrates the centrality of narrative sense-making in human life, in response to all manner of events or occurrences.

In contrast, I was able to compare the narratives produced from my telling of my adoption story, to two different interviewers, one as part of my reflective positioning for this research, and one as part of a Radio New Zealand story. These interviews were conducted five years apart, but upon reading the transcripts, I was struck by their similarity. It appeared to me that I had constructed specific narratives at different points in time to explain or account for my experiences and position, and then more or less adhered to those in my re-telling to different audiences on different occasions, albeit with some additions. This led me to consider that narrative (identity) construction might be rather more parsimonious than some would suggest – more narrative effort is expended when needed (for understanding or coherence), and then more minimal effort to maintain or make subtle changes during periods of relative stability. I could also see that there were a number of different narrative threads, not all saying the same thing about me or my adoption experience. Some narratives were entrenched and had 'stuck' more than others (for example, my telling of my adoptive difference), and some narratives later to emerge (for example, the sweat lodge insight), supplemented rather than supplanted earlier narratives. This suggests that as there are different types and levels of narratives within any given life story (McAdams 2018, 362-3), there are different degrees of narrative construction and reconstruction. This dispels any notion that individuals are continually in the process of major narrative overhaul, or that personal narratives change radically and frequently. To do so would undermine the function of narrative in affirming a person's sense of inner sameness and continuity across different situational and role contexts (McAdams 2018, 364).

As well as coming to terms with their experiences over time through narrative, adoptees also construct themselves in the process. Participants characterised themselves in numerous ways in their interviews. For example, supporting the notion of transracial adoptive identity as hard-fought and hard-

won (Howell 2006, 133; Honig 2005, 215), Rick and Kere spoke of themselves as fighters, and Sonya emphasised her agency in having created her own life, taking back control rather than being defined by others. Accepting their marginal positioning by virtue of their adoption, Emma and Kere talked about their tendency to advocate for the underdog, Lisa considered herself an outsider, and Daniel and Kere embraced the label of "bastard". The "bastard" is an archetypal spoiled or stigmatised identity. Natasha declared her comfort being in-between and outside of binary categories, a "trickster" persona who breaks the 'rules' of identification. Jenny articulated strongly her role as mother and nurturer, and Donna-Marie was the central character of her real-life "fairy-tale". Rua was still very much searching and exploring, and Paul was re-engaging with his adoption 'journey'. Some participants took on more of a protagonist role in their accounts than others, but there is also a difference in tone. For some their 'oppositional' characters highlighted a central struggle, and their moral agency in challenging and resisting an oppressive status quo, while others emphasised their personal growth and agency, and rather less struggle. Coupled with the strong resistance to constructions of the pathological and rescued or grateful adoptee which imply a bad or flawed self, these characterisations accentuated agency, affirmed participants as 'good', and supported them to craft a positive identity. Such narrative (re)construction was important in countering the rejection, differentness and low self-worth that some participants experienced from being-adopted. Participants could resist any damage from stigmatisation, and 'repair' their identities (Stone 2016, 958).

As a whole, the narratives shared by participants were stories of redemption – adoption as a potentially negative event that turned out to have a positive, growth-inducing and valued outcome (Klevan 2013, 42; McAdams et al. 2001, 476; McAdams and Bowman 2001, 5). Agency was not the only motivational theme referenced in relation to redemption; Mere's recent narrative transition emphasises her personal growth in terms of coming to empathise with her birth mother, a theme of communion and connection to others (McAdams 1996, 308). It is telling that participants' narrative trajectories were not those of "contamination", characterised by a negative tone, multiple negative events, a downward 'arc', and a lack of agency (McAdams and Bowman 2001, 5, 22). It may be that participants experienced more positive events, or negative events that led to positive outcomes, in addition to negotiating and making sense of these in more positive ways for any number of reasons (life-stage, time since negative event, for example). Caution should be exercised in extrapolating any further, lest deficit attributions are levelled at those with "contamination narratives."

The accounts that were elicited in this research demonstrated the important role of narrative construction in coming to terms with the stigma of adoption experiences, and accounting for birth origins in life stories. Narratives were important in making meaning from experiences and events; a fascinating example of this was the narration of "uncanny coincidences" as synchronous and

meaningful rather than random occurrences. Personal narratives also played a central part in bridging subjectivity and identity, and thereby forming part of identity work. In general the identities constructed by participants were positive, demonstrating the cultural impetus towards redemptive and idealised selves that exists in Western societies (McAdams 1996, 301, 305, 309; McAdams 2013, 211), as well as adoptee resistance to traditional deficit constructions.

Māori adoptee experiences of Māori identity

It was clear from participants' narratives that in spite of their socialisation outside of the Māori world, over time and in the course of being-in-the-world, they developed an understanding of what it means to be Māori that aligned with Māori perspectives. An overview of participants' positioning and positionality with regards to key dimensions of Māori identity experiences can be gleaned through application of the Multi-dimensional Model of Māori Identity and Cultural Engagement (I and II) put forth by Houkamau and Sibley (2010; 2015). The six categories, namely positive group membership evaluation, perceived appearance, socio-political consciousness, cultural efficacy and active identity engagement, spirituality and interdependent self-concept, are outlined and discussed below.

Positive group membership evaluation: Being-Māori was very special to participants and membership in the social group "Māori" was highly valued even if a sometimes fraught experience. Despite seven participants growing up in the period of urbanisation and assimilation, raised in a predominantly Pākehā environment and surrounded by negative evaluations of Māori, compared to participants in a 2006 study (Houkamau 2006, 212-3) who were born in the same period, they had a more positive evaluation of what it means to be Māori. As a whole, participants in this study shared a view of being Māori consistent with a "post-renaissance" (post-1970) cohort in Houkamau's study: a perception of Māori identity as valuable and desirable, associated with increased socio-political awareness and action, and their own identities characterised by complexity and changeability (Houkamau 2006, 214-215). The differences may reflect participants being at least partially buffered from racism due to their location in primarily Pākehā whānau, up until their independent identity exploration in a more progressive context, from the mid-1970s. It is also possible that for some, restricted access to their *taha Māori* (Māori side) and its uniqueness in the context of their adoptive families may have imbued it with mystique and value. These findings may also reflect a 'natural' increase in Māori identification and engagement as participants aged, although reports of the specialness of being Māori from a young age for most participants challenge a purely developmental explanation.

All participants took various opportunities to identify openly as Māori, and being-Māori was a central aspect of their identity. Participants' *perceived appearance* had a bearing on whether identification was construed as a 'choice', or whether they were more likely to be identified as Māori by others. For those visibly identifiable as Māori (12 participants), this was sometimes an uncomfortable experience – 'outing' them as adopted and different, or seeing them subject to cultural authenticity expectations that they could not meet. A number of participants discussed a shifting self-perception between childhood and adulthood – several, despite being "phenotypically prototypical" of the Māori ethnic group (Houkamau and Sibley 2015, 283), thought of themselves as white or Pākehā early in life due to their upbringing as "as if biological" children of predominantly Pākehā parents. These moments of "feeling white" would then be disrupted by others' comments to the contrary, or seeing oneself in a family photo (see also Walton 2015, 405-6). As all have come to see themselves as Māori as adults, four noted their being judged for their fair-skinned or non-Māori appearance by others.

Participants' *socio-political consciousness* had grown over time, developing beyond the views of their primarily Pākehā adoptive parents who were noted to span a spectrum of "liberal" through to colour-evasive in orientation. All participants, either through formal studies, their own research, or occupational focus, had engaged in furthering their understanding of historical issues such as the Treaty of Waitangi. However, given their upbringing in Pākehā society, some participants perceived their understandings could only ever be limited – learned rather than lived. In combination with this perceived lack of lived experience, feelings of loyalty to their adoptive families led two participants to feel uncomfortable asserting Māori rights. Eight participants gave voice to their socio-political consciousness in a professional capacity, working as identified Māori professionals in specific areas, or in dedicated Māori positions, contributing purposefully towards Māori advancement. Of the remaining participants, two were more ambivalent, while three were supportive but less inclined to put their personal opinions and positions forward.

As has been previously articulated, *cultural efficacy and active identity engagement* was one of the most problematic identity dimensions for participants. Only one participant expressed confidence in their ability to navigate te ao Māori; all others felt that they had some way to go to feel comfortable or at ease in Māori situations. These feelings may have been amplified by participants' *authenticity beliefs*, their subscription to the notion that being-Māori is contingent on specific (stereotypical) features, knowledge and behaviour. Participants found themselves subject to such notions in everyday life, but also aspired to meet such ideals. Given their socialisation apart from their birth whānau, participants could not deny the malleability of identity, nor the role of the environment in who they had become. However, they in no way thought of identity as an entirely fluid construct and did not possess the surety to rebuff traditional or essential Māori identity forms (McIntosh 2005,

46). Their precarity as Māori adoptees did not afford them that luxury. While some participants were quick to disclose their adoptive status in order that their identity claims would not be misinterpreted or deemed fraudulent, others chose not to, lest this led to unwanted scrutiny.

Over two thirds of participants expressed beliefs in Māori concepts of *spirituality*, with four citing a strong connection with ancestors or land as a form of embodied knowing. Given the high value placed on wairuatanga in Māori society (Royal 2009, 4), such experiences may have the effect of authenticating one's connectedness, if not compensating entirely for cultural 'shortfalls'. In several cases (for example, Rick), this sense of spiritual connection provided cultural affirmation that was not always guaranteed in interactions with Māori people. Finally, in terms of *interdependent self-concept*, some participants noted their slight awkwardness in collective Māori contexts. Several participants noted the value of whānau relationships in helping them to become accustomed to an interdependent mode of being, distinct from their upbringing in more individualistic Pākehā society.

Without categorising participants with regards to their identities as Māori, the discussion in terms of the Multi-dimensional Model of Māori Identity and Cultural Engagement II (MMM-ICE II) elements is useful for summarising the unique struggles of Māori adoptees, and highlighting some of the challenges of Māori identity as it is defined and experienced. For instance, for Māori adoptees, several items of the "cultural efficacy and active identity engagement" sub-scale are experienced as 'stereotypical' "authenticity beliefs." This reflects adoptees' difficulties in 'performing' a Māori cultural identity. Furthermore, the importance of whakapapa – positioned on the slightly negatively oriented "authenticity beliefs" sub-scale, was accepted by participants as the 'baseline' criteria for being-Māori; despite this being experienced as a restriction due to the effects of closed adoption, in and of itself, whakapapa was not viewed as an oppressive construct. Thus, although the MMM-ICE II elements reflect a general consensus regarding Māori identity, how these elements interrelate and apply may well differ for distinct Māori groupings.

Māori-Pākehā^2 (aka indigenous-colonised^2) subjects

Central to the challenges of Māori identity faced by Māori adoptees is the marginality of the Māori-Pākehā^2 individual, a 'special' kind of hybrid. Here I am utilising superscript to indicate the "double colonisation" (McLeod 2000, 177) that Māori adoptees experience: subject to colonialism as Māori, and bionormativity as adopted people. The workings of settler colonialism and closed adoption – simultaneous reproduction and denial of difference – converge in such a way that has seen Māori adoptees excluded from discourses of Māoriness (see Table 8 next page). Rather than being perceived as colonised *whanaunga* (relations), it appears that in some contexts, being-adopted has been perceived

as spoiling Māori identity beyond repair, akin to "not-being-Māori." I have argued, similarly to Bell (2004) that this is because the adopted Māori subject betrays the strategic essentialist project that Māori have found it necessary to engage in, as a stand against the lingering impositions of colonial discourse (Bidois 2012, 114).

Table 8: The dynamics of settler colonialism and adoption and their impact on Māori adoptees

	Colonialism	**Closed stranger adoption**	**Adoption of indigenous children**
Biological essentialism	• Racialisation • 'Blood' quantum – authenticity of membership/belonging/ identity	• As if biological family • 'Natural' or 'blood' ties – authenticity of membership, belonging and identity	
Legislated state intervention or control	• Māori Affairs Act 1953	• Adoption Act 1955	• Adoption Amendment Act 1962 • Control of indigenous reproduction
Policy aims	• Assimilation/integration	• Erasure of illegitimacy • Assimilation of illegitimate non-biological children into nuclear family unit	• Assimilation of racialised and de-raced adoptees • Elimination of cultural practices, language and identity
Denial of difference	• Colour-blindness • Denial but reproduction of difference via national citizenship, universalism, sameness rather than equity	• As if biological • Matching • Difference coded as special • "Imagined sameness" – the adopted child's otherness is negated in specific ways (Howell 2006)	• Silence or lack of narrative regarding Māori adoptees in Māori communities
Pathologisation – the problem is with the [insert specific pathology here] "Other"	• The sick, criminal, deficient indigenous/racial subject	• The ungrateful, maladjusted, neurotic adoptee	• The inauthentic Māori adoptee • Māori-Pākehā[2] hybrids
Authenticity claims	• Strategic essentialism - "a qualified acceptance of the need for substantive identity claims, within a context which is theoretically anti-essentialist", representation as constitutive (Bell 2004, 133)	• Paradoxical/contingent essentialism	• 'Conflicted subjectivity': claiming Māoriness racially but not culturally; claiming whiteness culturally but not racially

Among these impositions are the anti-essentialist claims of a liberal political climate that *supposes* we are now post-colonial and non-biocentric. In an extension of the assimilationist settler colonial operation, social inclusion erases through normalisation (Rudy 2019, 207). Subsequently, the legitimacy of Māori adoptee subjectivities are further challenged, their alienation attributed to a bygone era or individual neurosis. This is amplified by the lack of collective articulation of the social contradictions of racism, sexism, and so on, that other subaltern groups enjoy (Rudy 2019, 209).

Beyond Lee's (2003) transracial adoption paradox, which considered the "conflicted" and Othered subjectivity of a body racialised as non-white, but "cultured" as white (Walton 2015, 407), there is a further stage in which transracial adoptees' cultural whiteness sees their non-white race or heritage negated, particularly in their racial or ethnic communities (for example, Samuels 2010; Harness 2008). This marginalisation was most keenly experienced by participants at the "pan-Māori" level; in whānau contexts their shared whakapapa *was* enough. As noted previously, for some participants, this created considerable ambivalence regarding a pan-Māori identification and the associated politics.

What we might learn from Māori adoptee identities

In the past 10-15 years, Māori and indigenous scholars (McIntosh, Webber, Borell, Houkamau, Barcham, Gonzalez, Bidois) have written about the limited understanding of 'alternative' Māori identity forms and markers, noting the potential for the strengthening and enrichment of Māori identity through emphases on processual "becoming", flexible routes rather than rigid roots and non-binary categorisations. While this work is commendable for seeking to expand the range of identity options for Māori (Edwards 2009, 5), it has not accounted for the unique position of Māori adoptees. This is because the focus has been on *non-adopted* Māori identities, either confronting colonialism, or strategic essentialism, but not necessarily both or their intersection. Furthermore, the fact that bionormativity does not present the same problems from a Māori perspective (i.e. whakapapa is taken for granted as *the* basic criterion for claiming Māori identity: O'Carroll 2013, 5), means that it does not elicit the same attention in considerations of identity. Where the 'answers' to both problems of Māori identity are either strategic essentialism or anti-essentialism, neither are particularly satisfactory or comfortable for Māori adoptees.

The experiences and narratives of Māori adoptees regarding Māori identity reveal the importance of a "middle ground", a return to and revisiting of 'traditional' and alternative epistemologies on the one hand, and beyond, to territories of new identity complexity on the other

(Wetherell 2010, 18). In her exploration of the Ngāti Kahungunu[111] urban diaspora, despite arguing for fluidity, Gonzalez (2010, 33) also recognises the risks of a continually dynamic notion of identity which may fail to account for people's strength of feeling about belonging. She notes: "in being cautious with purist invocations, we should not assume that essentialism plays no pivotal and real role in the lives of people." Certainly, the "paradoxical essentialism" exemplified by Māori adoptees is an important enabling concept, allowing for construction, flexibility and mobility in some respects, and substance, stability and immobility in others (Lien and Melhuus 2007, ix).

Beyond confirming the role of discourse in constructing subject 'realities', positions and identities, Māori adoptee experiences also elucidate the workings of discursive paradox: a specific type of tension generated by contradictory dominant discourses (Mease 2016, 60). In the adoption paradox, 'as if biological' adoptive status is undermined by bionormative dominant discourses. In the transracial adoption paradox, discourses relating to race, culture and kinship conflict. In the "thicker than water, thinner than time" paradox, bionormative discourses are subject to kinship discourses. Finally, the paradox of whakapapa is produced by opposing legal colonial discourses and Māori relational/kinship discourses. Living with and within the paradoxes created by closed stranger adoption means that Māori adoptees must justify and defend their positions on either side or outside of the adoptive/biological binary, and contend with these contradictory discourses throughout their adoption trajectories. Seeking to *resolve* the tensions may lead to separation of and choice of one 'pole' (*dilemma*), or integration and synthesis of contradictory elements (*dialectic*) (Dameron and Torset 2014, 294). These responses would see Māori adoptees either choosing adoptive *or* birth origins, or embracing hybridity. The first response is somewhat problematic – either i) wholly 'assimilating' and denying biological origins, or ii) disingenuously denying the fact of their adoption. The second response is problematic from a strategic essentialist objective, but also in potentially not accounting for the non-additive intersection of adoptive and Māori identities, and the 'special' case of hybridity posed by transracial adoptees. These problems may account for some participants' rejection of the pan-Māori identity. With the exception of response i), none of the "resolution" responses are able to obviate the kinship paradoxes, given the 'clean break' of closed adoption that separates biological and social.

Supporting the notion that transracial adoption generates "irresolvable contradictions" (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000, 83), a third response is that of *acceptance*. In this position, the underlying tensions are embraced simultaneously, in a both/and orientation (Dameron and Torset 2014, 294). Paradoxical essentialism emerges as the response that allows Māori adoptees to honour both their biological and indigenous origins and their adoptive socialisation, in a way that felt right

[111] Ngāti Kahungunu is the large tribal grouping of the lower east coast of the North Island.

and comfortable for them. This is not without its challenges however; to accept the paradox is to *not* choose, to be ambivalent, and to contest dominant discourses in a more complex and nuanced way. It should not be considered sufficient or acceptable to rely on individuals to manage or carry the tensions of competing dominant discourses. To realise true transformation, the gaze must remain firmly on hegemonic institutions and practices, even as they reconfigure themselves in new guises.

Reflections on method

Chapters Five and Six outlined the key methodological decisions taken in order to research Māori adoptees' experiences of adoption and identity in the most appropriate way. Two aspects in particular would appear to have had a significant bearing on the findings generated. The first relates to the decision to explore the lived experiences of being-adopted-and-Māori in general, rather than investigate identity directly. This means that what I have collected from participants and reported in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten extends beyond identity to subjectivity. This consideration of Māori adoptee subjectivity also extends to the first finding of this chapter, that the Māori adoptee experience is significantly discursively produced. Arguably, drawing the focus more broadly may also account for finding that identity is a more expansive property that operates at a fundamental, ontological level. The question could be posed as to whether what I purport to be 'identity' is actually that, or the post-positivist realist embedded and emergent self, of which identity is but one part. A post-positivist realist conceptualisation of identity has proven valuable for its inclusive account, and its application to Māori adoptees is novel. I found these components difficult to delineate in participant narratives and so made the subsequent decision to report identity as part of the whole, rather than a discrete part. It is through its embeddedness that identity becomes a much larger 'project'. Distinctions between personal and social identity *were* able to be drawn, which clarifies that adoptive identity and Māori identity may be understood as spanning both personal and social identity constructs.

It would be an interesting exercise to conduct research with Māori adoptees that asks about identity explicitly. However, in order to mitigate the possibility of leading participants towards a particular view, asking for Māori adoptees' deliberations on and critique of the construct of identity might be necessary. Building such a focus into several interviews would allow for more than a 'snapshot' to be ascertained, and a deeper, reiterative reflection on identity-related narratives and experiences.

The depth of the account of Māori adoptee identity presented here may well be constrained by the collection of data in a single interview, and the limited feedback from participants regarding their transcripts. Given the diverse geographical locations of participants, the cost of this would have

exceeded the limited budget available. Analysis has an important role to play in drawing out deeper meanings and insights from the data that have been collected. Supplementing an empathetic hermeneutic stance with a more 'suspicious' stance enabled the underlying social constraints to be identified in what the participants said and did not say.

The purposively selected sample means that the conclusions drawn are not generalisable to, or representative of the Māori adoptee population. This was not the objective of the research. The purpose of this study was to present rich and detailed accounts of lived experiences and in-depth analyses of the interpretations and understandings involved; this has been achieved.

A final and somewhat larger concern is related to the ultimate outcomes of the research, and the extent to whether these are transformative. Lopez and Willis (2004, 730) argue that in interpretive phenomenological research the researcher must "go further" by interpreting the meanings for practice, research and policy. While such implications have been drawn from the research findings, there are limits to their uptake and application, given that closed stranger adoption is no longer practiced in Aotearoa New Zealand and domestic adoption rates have sharply declined. At the least, study findings elucidate the impacts upon Māori adoptees, an area which has been given limited attention and which is also of consequence for their children and grandchildren. Findings may also be relevant to and inform discussions of the case of international adoptees, a growing population (Iwanek 1998, 27; Scherman 2005, 13). Furthermore, the understandings of how individuals establish belonging and navigate difference in circumstances where there is social/biological separation may be relevant beyond the issue of adoption; extending potentially to children born into 'new' or 'non-traditional' family forms through assisted reproductive technologies and surrogacy.

Lest we forget…

Who speaks and who does not, who is spoken and who is not, who is heard, and who is not heard in our society is shaped by power dynamics embedded in colonial relations. The silence of the Crown with respect to indigenous child removal has been discussed as a form of wilful forgetting, a denial in order to not be confronted with or remember "uncomfortable histories" (Haebich 2000, 565; Haenga-Collins 2017, 201). It is also a hallmark of historical privilege (Borell, Moewaka Barnes and McCreanor 2018, 29). Conversely, not being remembered, not having a place in the collective historical memory, not being recognised or narrated is to be silenced, a hallmark of historical trauma (Borell et al. 2018, 31; Byrd and Rothberg 2011, 6). Herein lies the significance of formal apologies for forced adoptions and child removal – a breaking of the official silence, a collective acknowledgement and recognition of the silenced subject that can instigate healing.

While closed stranger adoption was a form of "prescriptive forgetting", an act of state that was thought to be in the interests of all parties (Connerton 2008, 61), the Māori community response could be described as "forgetting as humiliated silence" – a silence associated with collusion and feelings of collective shame, which entails a desire to forget (Connerton 2008, 67). Unfortunately, this has profound implications for the Māori adoptee. Already silenced by the fact of their closed stranger adoption (Blake 2013, 141), to be greeted with silence among the community that they wish to identify with and belong to, can be a difficult experience. West (2012, 4, 64) notes the "silent voice of the Māori adoptee", in both Māori identity politics and in the Māori community more generally, which she perceives has denied us the benefits of recognition, self-determination and collectivity realised for the broader population in the past 30 years. She issues the following challenge: "instead of the Māori adoptee navigating their journey alone, it is time for whānau, hapū and iwi to ask – where are our tamariki?" (120).

Of course, Māori adoptees are not entirely alone in this. Aotearoa New Zealand has a long history of child removal; state intervention in the care of indigenous children formed an important part of the colonisation/assimilation project (Armitage 1995, 5-6). Māori children were removed from their families in considerable number between the 1950s and 1990s and placed in less permanent foster care or institutions. It is estimated that more than 100,000 children were placed in state care in this period, and nearly half of children in state homes in the 1970s were Māori (Human Rights Commission 2017, n.p). The stories of state care survivors are now being heard within the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. The promise of the Commission delivering 'truth and reconciliation' is palpable, if not guaranteed. Representing perhaps the more 'respectable' and 'palatable' end of the removal spectrum, Māori adoptees are beginning to be acknowledged within those stories that collectively characterise Aotearoa New Zealand's stolen generation (Smale 2017, n.p).

In the silence, the Māori adoptee was not spoken of, they were absent from and unrecognised in discourses of Māori identity and agency, and in the reclamation and assertion of indigenous spaces. In this course of events, the Māori adoptee is a casualty of both colonisation and attempts at decolonisation. The consequences for Māori adoptee subjectivities and identities are substantial, and as the emerging voices of their tamariki and mokopuna suggest (Newman 2011, 147-157; Paradies 2006, 358), no less significant for future generations. What do we do for those who are one or several steps removed from the original dislocation, to support them to come to terms with those origins and the identity implications, *about which* there is so much silence? Seeing and hearing the Māori adoptee for all that they represent and offer, insight as well as caution, must be our first step.

Afterword

Let us first build a whare where we can share our stories…From afar, our whare shines in the blank: it is a tiny speck in the great abyss of Te Pō. It carries us all. It is so small in the vastness, so vulnerable. How is it not crushed by the black? Be comforted by the thought that eventually night arcs into day.

We must continue. Walls. Plain for now, but by the end of our telling they will be carved by words and deeds – life, if you'd call it that, frozen in the moment. Past, present, future simultaneous. As it is, as it should be.

*…**We** live in the telling.*

*…In this form we can exist in many places, in many minds at once – but these words cannot adequately convey the actual experience of our lives. These shapes and groups that you think of as **words** are just ghosts, the faint outline of a life, an approximation.*
Still, it is enough for you to glimpse the world of the other.

…Through stories, you can achieve the impossible and travel through time. Past, present, future – all able to be lived and felt by you. The lives you can live within a story are endless…

…perhaps you think you know our stories. Because our names are our story, they are us. They become part of the words that have been spoken about us, written about us, they bind us like the aka vine – their whispers encircle and define us. We have all found ourselves clothed in a character that wasn't familiar – in skin that was pulled and stretched to fit another idea of us. It is a partial truth. Not ours, but theirs.

Perhaps a story can only be told in slivers; no one can perceive the whole, the truth. Because is it ever truly possible for anyone to understand the life of another completely? We will tell you our stories anyway…

Whiti Hereaka (2019, 24-8)

Subjects that demand to be told

What has been achieved in this 'telling' of Māori adoptee experiences? As the prose above suggests, narrative is only ever partially representative of a person's life and lived experiences, but without it we are constrained in our understanding of others, 'other worlds', and by extension also our own. I have had the privilege of listening to those who I consider to be 'my people', those who have been subject to the same mechanism of closed stranger adoption. In many ways their narratives of their experiences have affirmed my own, but in several instances I was also challenged, to re-think the meaning of liminality for instance. My participants reminded me to stay with the complexity of our experiences, and that we can and must honour our adoptive families and kinship even while rallying against the institution of closed adoption.

I learned that despite researching this topic, my lived experience as a Māori adoptee prevails. I long for the biologically essential as much as the next adoptee 'searcher' despite understanding the social construction that is at work. Moments of biological *continuity* are when I have *felt* my deepest peace. Going to bed in the whare of my ancestors, the whare that has sheltered many a whanaunga, with my boys and husband beside me, or observing a resemblance between my auntie and son, knowing that I was the conduit for this connection. Am I simply adhering uncritically to essentialist discourses? Perhaps I am enticed by the power of discursive redemption? What is *real* is something I have wrestled with as an adoptee, and still as an adoptee researcher.

These moments I mention are non-contrived moments of re-connection not necessarily shared or publicly narrated. They are private realisations not reliant on the recognition of others. Deeply personal and significant to my sense of self and personhood, they were untainted by social commentary or critique. They were moments without words, but full of meaning nonetheless, and freed from the burden of proving authenticity to others. It is these moments, sometimes few and far between, that furnish the whare I have (re-)constructed, in which I might dwell comfortably. I heard from my participants that this was also what they were seeking, although sometimes in different ways, their whare in different states and stages, or structured altogether differently.

The importance of narrative in and to the future of Māori adoptees is clear. There are narratives yet to be heard, of those who do not search or tell, and further narrative research that may be undertaken. Narrative enables us to bring our pasts into our present, to therapeutic effect. As indigenous people we have traditions of story to reconnect and restore us. Narrative is the 'stuff' of engaging with each other and non-adopted others, so that we may gain strength and break the silences. And narrative is imperative for those who come after us, to understand and acknowledge the legacy of adoption in their own lives, so that they too, may move beyond.

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Glossary of Māori Words

ahi kā	burning fires of occupation, continuous occupation – title to land through occupation by a group, generally over a long period of time
ako	to learn, study, instruct, teach, advise
Aotearoa	the Māori name for New Zealand
aroha	affection, compassion, love, empathy
aroha ki te tangata	affection, compassion, love, empathy to the people
awa	river
awhi	embrace, cuddle, cherish
hāngī	earth oven
hāpuka	groper, grouper fish
haka	performance of the haka (noun); to dance, perform (verb)
hapū	kinship group, clan, sub-tribe
harakeke	New Zealand flax
hau kāinga	home people, local people of a marae
Hawaiki	ancient homeland of the Māori people, the places from which Māori migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand. It is believed that the wairua returns to these places after death.
he kanohi kitea	a seen face
hui	meeting, gathering
hurihuringa	reflexivity
ira tangata	biological base, human genes
iwi	kinship grouping, tribe
kai	food

kanohi	face
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face, in person
kapa haka	haka group, Māori cultural group, Māori performing group
ka pai	good
karakia	prayer
karanga	call
kaua	do not, don't, had better not, should not, must not
kaumātua	elder/s
kaupapa	purpose or agenda, principle
kaupapa Māori	for, by and with Māori; Māori agenda/principles
kia tūpato	be careful
koha	gift, donation
kōhatu	stone, rock
kōhanga	nest, nursery, Māori language pre-school
kōrero	to tell, say, speak, talk (verb); speech, narrative, story, discussion (noun)
koro	elderly man, grandfather
korowai	finely woven flax cloaks
kuia	elderly woman, grandmother, female elder
māhaki	to be inoffensive, mild, calm, humble
Māori	normal, usual, natural, common or ordinary, used to refer to indigenous New Zealanders
Māoritanga	Māoriness, Māori culture, practices and beliefs
māramatanga	understanding, enlightenment
mātauranga	knowledge, wisdom

mamae	pain, ache, injury, wound
mana	prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, charisma
manaaki/tanga	to support, take care of, give hospitality to, protect, show respect, generosity and care for others (verb); support, hospitality, caring for, kindness (noun)
marae	courtyard - the open area in front of the *wharenui*, where formal greetings and discussions take place. Often also used to include the complex of buildings around the *marae*.
matua	father, parent, uncle
maunga	mountain, mount, peak
mauri	life force, essence, life principle
mihimihi	greetings, personal introductions, speech of greeting, tribute
mokopuna	grandchild/grandchildren, descendant
ngākau	seat of affections, heart, soul
ngāwari	to be affable, easy-going, flexible
pā	fortified village
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European origin
pepeha	tribal saying, proverb
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, story
ringawera	kitchen worker, kitchen hand
rohe	area
taha	side
takahi(a)	to trample, stamp
tangata	human, individual, person
tangata whenua	people of the land

taonga	treasure, anything prized
tauiwi	foreigner, European, non-Māori
Te Ao Māori	the Māori world
Te Ao Mārama	the world of light
Te Ao Pākehā	the Pākehā world
Te Ao Tūroa	the natural world
Te Kore	the void, abyss
Te Pō	the night, darkness
te reo	the language
Te Waipounamu	Māori term for the South Island, the greenstone waters
Te Whaiao	the world of light
tikanga	culture, customs, traditions
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy
titiro	to look at, inspect, examine, observe
toto	blood
tupuna/tūpuna	ancestor/s, grandparent/s
tūrangawaewae	place to stand
tūturu	to be fixed, permanent, real, true, actual, authentic, original
urupā	burial ground, cemetery, graveyard
utu	to repay, pay, respond, avenge, reply (verb); revenge, vengeance, reciprocity (noun)
wānanga	collective forum in which knowledge is created and evaluated
waiata	song (noun); to sing (verb)
wairua	spirit
whaea	mother, aunt, aunty

whakaaro	to think, plan, consider, decide (verb); thought, opinion, plan, idea (noun)
whakamā	deep cultural shame, embarrassment (noun); to be ashamed, shy, embarrassed (verb)
whakamana	to empower, validate, enable
whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, descent (noun); to place in layers (verb)
whakapaparanga	layer, series of layers, generation
whakarongo	to listen, hear
whakawhanaungatanga	process of establishing relationships
whakawhirinaki	to lean against something, trust in, depend on (verb); trust, dependability, dependence (noun)
whānau	family
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship
whāngai	customary adoption, literal meaning to feed, nourish or nurture
whare	house
whare nui	meeting house
whare wānanga	place of higher learning
whare whakairo	carved house
whenua	land, ground

Appendices

Appendix I: Literature Review & Search Strategy

Although literature review is not cited as a specific hermeneutic phenomenological method, it is an important component of research. In 2011/2012 a preliminary review of theoretical literature was conducted, and some of the key theoretical and thematic concepts identified and drawn out in an initial proposal for this project. A more expansive literature search was then undertaken, to inform the literature review for the research proper. Key terms used in literature searches (internet (Google Scholar) and University of Canterbury (UC) library catalogue and journal databases) included:

- Māori adoptee/Māori adoption/adoption + Māori
- Identity formation/construction/development/negotiation/theory/
- Identity cultural/personal/social
- Self
- Identity + Māori adoptee
- Identity + Māori
- Lived experience + adoption/ + identity
- Phenomenology + adoption/ + identity
- Key terms from various disciplines + adoption/+ identity

From this, and additional broader readings, citations in papers and textbooks provided a further source of literature, as they enabled the identification of additional authors and references of interest/relevance. Many of these searches yielded large numbers of potential references – for example, a Google Scholar search on 'adoption' AND 'Māori' conducted in March 2011 generated 13,900 results. The literature on identity is similarly expansive. Thus, this literature review was not intended or designed to be exhaustive but instead selective (constituting a narrative literature review: Cronin, Ryan and Coughlan 2008, 38). Books, book chapters and conceptual journal articles were found to be more informative in terms of laying out broad frameworks of interconnected constructs and providing definitions of terms. Thus, these were the focus of initial searches, with searches for empirical studies undertaken subsequently in order to ensure that new or current research was also included. Two search alerts were set up for the PsycINFO and Web of Knowledge/Science databases in October 2012, to identify empirical studies focused on various aspects of adoption. These alerts were established to run for the duration of this project, limited to English language material but with no date restriction. The following terms were specified:

- adopt* (adopted, adoptee/s, adoption, adoptive)
- child/children
- father/fathers
- mother/mothers
- parent* (parenting, parenthood, parents)
- identity
- self*

Appendix II: Pre-understandings, Perspective & Positioning – Matters of Reflexive Rigour

A hermeneutic fore-structure of understanding

My relationship to and interest in this kaupapa is based in my being a Māori adoptee. This fact makes this research undoubtedly personal, something I have endeavoured to harness the strengths of, rather than be limited or constrained by, reflecting my belief in the merits of a considered subjectivity. While not necessarily promoting insider research explicitly, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges researcher pre-understanding as "a fact of our being-in-the-world" (Tan et al. 2009, 4) and recognises the need for researchers to explore and declare their own understandings of particular phenomena, and subsequently, how these influence their perception of the understandings of their research participants (Wojnar and Swanson 2007, 174; Wiklund-Gustin 2010, 35). This involves laying out preconceptions, biases and past experiences that make the research focus significant for the researcher, and that may affect how interpretation takes shape. Comprising the researcher's *fore-structure of understanding* (or horizon of meaning according to Gadamer: DuBose 1995, 21), these may be elicited in narrative form (Plager 1994, 72).

Discussion of the process of documenting and interrogating researcher pre-understandings is fairly vague in the literature, however one thing is certain – the centrality of reflection. Although I had recorded thoughts and feelings in assorted notebooks in the course of my research, a specific incident led me to seek another method of reflection. The profundity of the death of my biological maternal grandfather was such that I found myself unable to articulate my experience independently and in written form. Upon discussing this issue with my colleague Shanee Barraclough, we agreed that she would interview me using the schedule I had developed for use with my study participants. This approach would not only provide a hopefully more effective mode of eliciting my personal experiences as a Māori adoptee, but would enable a point of comparison with my research participants' texts, and an opportunity to apply and trial the narrative/hermeneutic/phenomenological analysis approach proposed.

Heidegger (1927/2011) posited a three-fold fore-structure of understanding upon which all interpretation is based (Plager 1994, 71-2) – "a framework of already interpreted relations", which encompasses the interpreter's past and current situation, and anticipates the future (Odman 1988, 66; Wilcke 2002, 3). Fore-having refers to the taken for granted aspects of existence, the habits and practices acquired through socialisation that provide a sense of the whole phenomenon, its constitutive parts and relations (Kogler 1999, 92; Leonard 1994, 57; Geanellos 1998; 241). Fore-sight or fore-

seeing is the situated interpreter's perspective informed by life history and biographical events that orients them towards a phenomenon in a particular way (Kogler 1999, 92; Leonard 1994, 57). Lastly, fore-conception involves the interpreter's conceptual scheme, consisting of symbolic assumptions, different discursive orders, beliefs, concepts and conceptions relating to the phenomenon (Kogler 1999, 92).

In his model of critical hermeneutics focused explicitly on the influences of power and structure, Kogler (1999) refers to these as interrelated practical, subjective and symbolic spheres – the practical (fore-having) and symbolic (fore-conception) shaping the subjective (fore-seeing). This way of conceiving the interrelationship between fore-structure elements differs from Heidegger, who thought of fore-having constituting fore-sight, and fore-sight constituting fore-conception. Kogler's perspective bears similarity to the stratified ontology of critical realism – the real/discursive domain comprising practical and symbolic spheres, shaping and constituting the subjective sphere, which is comprised of both empirical and actual domains. The analysis of each of these layers and their interaction can lead to an account of "that which is constituting the constituted" (McAra-Couper 2007, 53-54).

<table>
<tr><th>Critical hermeneutic
fore-structure spheres
(Kogler)</th><th>Critical realism
ontological domains
(Bhaskar)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Symbolic sphere</td><td rowspan="2">Real/discursive</td></tr>
<tr><td>Practical sphere</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Subjective sphere</td><td>Actual</td></tr>
<tr><td>Empirical</td></tr>
</table>

Table 9: Fore-structure of understanding spheres mapped against domains of reality

According to these classifications, the narrative of events and experiences related to adoption and identity disclosed in my interviews correspond primarily with fore-having or the practical sphere and fore-sight or the subjective sphere. Fore-having and fore-sight are informed by narratives, practices and discourses from the practical and symbolic spheres, relating to my socialisation and being-in-the-world, and culminating in a particular worldview.

Researcher subjectivity and reflexivity

Other aspects of fore-structure detailed elsewhere in the thesis relate specifically to my research-oriented understandings. For example, fore-sight and fore-conception also incorporate influences from education and training; my initial orientation, preferred theories and preconceptions or expectations for the study are set out in the prologue, literature review and methodology chapters. This content traces my development out of psychology, into public health, kaupapa Māori and beyond, and the ways that these disciplines informed my approach to adoption and identity. Furthermore, a significant component of fore-having is the way(s) in which particular phenomena are constructed and understood in social contexts and through social practices. The social and ideological milieu in which closed stranger adoption of Māori children was practiced up until 1985, legitimised, institutionalised and underpinned by particular ways of thinking about nature/nurture, race, attachment and kinship, are discussed in the first literature review chapter. In this second respect, as the research progressed, what I learned informed not only the inquiry, but my understandings of adoption and identity in general.[112]

These last points allude to the interrelationships between subjectivity and reflexivity – between one's experiences of a phenomenon as a subject, one's relation with that phenomenon as a research object, as well as one's engagement with other subjects, and with other subjects as research objects/participants. Where subjectivity and reflexivity are commonly conceptualised as the interplay between the participants' voices and the researcher's interpretation of their meaning, whether participant-led or researcher-led (Willig 2017, 281), this is complicated by the insider researcher who is an interpreter and knower in two respects. I am engaging as both subject and researcher, but which, how and when is not always easy to delineate.

In the following sections I explore my subjectivity and reflexivity in two key ways. Firstly, I explore how my own experiences informed the particular 'framings' or constructions of adoption that I paid particular attention to, where there were moments of recognition and resonance, but also an opening up and expansion of my hermeneutic horizon. Secondly, I draw on interview narrative/data to lay out some of my thoughts relating to being-adopted-and-Māori. The intention of this second aspect is to establish some "critical distance" from my own material, and enable me to recognise my own experiences as separate from the participants' stories (Willig 2017, 282). The account I provide identifies some rather than all points of connection between my understandings and that of the research literature or participants.

[112] Coghlan and Brannick (2005, 62-3 cited in Ryan, 2011, 223) identify membership (i.e. fellow member/insider status), experience and education/training as three distinct elements of pre-understanding.

My pre-understandings and the literature review

My pre-understandings of adoption shaped the literature review chapters, particularly Chapter Two. I was motivated to pursue some specific 'burning' questions, which had been generated from my experience as a Māori adoptee, and that I had formed some thoughts around. I had come to understand various 'framings' or discourses of adoption as a result of my own experiences. Not all of these framings are reported in the final version of Chapter Two.

Adoption as family-building: I understood this from the family narrative that had been shared with my adopted sister and I growing up – my mother and father were unable to have their own children after several years of trying, and so in order to have a family their only option was to adopt. Our birth parents were unable to keep us (in my case my parents were too young and unmarried) and so they gave us up for adoption. My parents felt very fortunate in that, despite the reduced availability of babies at that point, they were offered my sister only 2 years after they had adopted me, likely because they had said they were happy to take any baby, regardless of ethnicity (my sister has a Tongan father and I have a Māori father). According to my parents, this made my sister and I special in that we were 'chosen' children. As a family, we were always aware that we were 'different' – the dark features of my adopted sister and I stood out to others in contrast to our adoptive family's fairer looks. People would sometimes do a double take when introduced to our family, a clear reaction to our non-resemblance. On one occasion, a stranger had wondered aloud how many fathers there must have been to these very different looking children. My parents appeared to take this in their stride, and as a family we were bemused by people's difficulty fathoming our uniqueness, but our family-ness all the same.

Adoption as loss: apart from my own experience of the losses of knowledge about self, and time and relationship with birth family, loss is 'fetishised' in popular programming such as 'Missing Pieces" and "Lost and Found.". In the early 2000s a programme entitled "Tūhono" recognised the significance of forging connections with birth origins, family and culture for dislocated Māori.

Adoption as stigma: I did not feel the stigma of my illegitimacy growing up in my adoptive family, and it wasn't until later in my childhood that I learned of the meaning of the term 'bastard'. I remember thinking that the term and associated stigma was no longer relevant, an historical artifact. However, I did observe some lingering effects of stigma in interactions with my birth mother. Following our reunion, on occasions when she introduced me as her daughter to people she had known for some time, their mental 'arithmetic' was apparent. It was slightly awkward as they calculated perhaps that I was 'that baby'. Later, the phenomenon of stigma helped me understand why my inclusion in my birth grandfather's funeral proceedings might have been difficult for my birth family. The seemingly insurmountable stigma of adoption, specifically illegitimacy, in that particular

situation, was a reminder of the powerful social norms still in force. This also spoke to the difficulty of post-reunion birth family relationships, the uncertainty regarding how to navigate these, and indeed, what they *mean*. My grief was therefore somewhat disenfranchised – not equivalent to that of my mother or my sisters and cousins, instead for my loss of my birth grandfather as a result of my adoption.

Adoption as pathology: This particular theme is evident throughout my personal narrative. I was characterised as an angry, frustrated child/young person, entailing numerous consultations with doctors, counsellors and psychologists. This culminated in my admission to an inpatient adolescent unit at Sunnyside hospital for behavioural intervention, at the age of 15. Interestingly, in my four months in the unit, only one mention was ever made of my being adopted – that 'acting out' and testing relationship boundaries was a common adoptee pattern of behaviour. This factor was not explored further, and in a disparaging discharge summary my difficulties were instead attributed to personal failings. I was indeed pathologised, but not for being an adoptee as far as I was aware.

Four years later, as a second year psychology student, I read Nancy Verrier's Primal Wound. The book was a revelation – I found its hypothesis compelling, indeed seductive. It provided a rationale for my struggles with being adopted, identified common patterns of behaviour and emotion that I saw in myself, and proposed that these were logical responses to the trauma of relinquishment. It said that adoption mattered! Furthermore, it supplied empirical data that told me that I was not alone in having these types of difficulties. However, the fact that this material was not taken seriously within the professional community that I then wished to be a part of (gleaned from feedback on a developmental psychology assignment), alerted me to the 'pop-psychology' status of The Primal Wound. Furthermore, I knew there was a risk that espousing the central premise publicly and loudly would position me as ungrateful. I had encountered particularly aggrieved adoptees in an adoption support group, and saw how they were perceived even by other adoptees – as 'stuck' and self-pitying. I did not want to be that adoptee, even if I empathised with them.

At a personal level then, while the Primal Wound did indeed provide some answers, its singular hypothesis felt too 'easy', too neat, too tidy, and too convenient. At this point in time, I was also in the process of meeting my birth family, and so as much as the Primal Wound was an enticing explanation for my childhood experiences, my immediate future held the promise of reunion, and healing. Therefore, I thought that my need for this type of explanation was no longer. I was going to resolve my adoption-related troubles through my relationships with my birth family and build that complete identity that I had always wanted. However, as I was to find, reunion was not a cure-all, and entailed particular difficulties and complexities.

Preunderstanding #1: Adoption is about family formation, loss, stigma/deviance, and pathology. But adoption creates a 'differentness' that is not explainable or fully understandable in these terms.

Adoption as discursive paradox: Thus far none of these ways of understanding adoption had been sufficient in accounting for the experience of being adopted in its entirety. I found being an adoptee to be confusing and replete with contradictions. I did not understand why in interactions with others, when I discussed or declared my status as adoptee, this was sometimes met with a dismissal of the significance of that experience, or non-response, an awkward silence. Why would people be motivated to deny the adoptee experience, when it flies in the face of what we are told nowadays about the importance of mother and child bonding, family kinship and belonging? Why would people have nothing to say about it? What are the usual reasons for denial or silence? Is adoption a problematic, uncomfortable or controversial issue, avoided due to embarrassment or shame? I could only conclude that adoption touched on something sensitive, perhaps a taboo (or several), and that there must be some larger forces or factors at work. Denys Delany and then Yngvesson and Mahoney's analyses of the paradox of closed adoption were therefore particularly illuminating, promising to explain the awkwardness, silences and denials that I had experienced. This finding meant that I would need to expand my focus to include the symbolic sphere – which I was able to account for with Ricoerian hermeneutic phenomenology.

My pre-understandings in relation to data collection and analysis

The products of my interview text analysis elucidated somewhat[113] my fore-structures of understanding related to adoption and identity, in several ways. Thematic analysis focused on the personal significance and meaning of adoption and identity based on experiences and events, corresponding to my worldview (spanning fore-sight and fore-conception, subjective and symbolic spheres, empirical and actual domains). In a second stage I applied a nature/culture lens as a particular discursive order with implications for adoption and identity (relating to fore-having and fore-conception, practical and symbolic spheres). Narrative analysis involved considering the events and experiences of socialisation, adoption and identity as they were narrated – including tone, plot/storyline, characters and corresponding narratives/themes (fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception, practical, subjective and symbolic spheres).

Preunderstanding #2: Adoption has ongoing impacts or effects throughout the life-course – struggles are not necessarily 'resolved'. However, the significance of adoption to adoptees ebbs, flows, and changes over time.[114]

[113] Complete knowledge of pre-understanding is not necessarily possible; according to Heidegger's account of the fore-structures, substantive components of fore-having and fore-sight lie outside or beneath consciousness (Almang 2008, 2).
[114] This preunderstanding presupposes that adoption has some effect on the adoptee.

In the course of my research, I have continued to have significant adoption-related experiences, one in particular that changed how I thought about adoption. The aforementioned death of my maternal grandfather challenged my preconceptions about the post-reunion relationship with birth family, and the ability to make up for the years not spent with them (reinforcing the "blood is thicker than water, thinner than time" paradox that I came across in indigenous adoptee identity accounts). This changed what I perceived as the 'end game' – not to establish an "as if not adopted" relationship, but some other form of kinship. This experience also reinforced that family membership and belonging depends significantly on social recognition, reinforcing the social dimension of adoption. Thus, I came to the realisation that adoptee agency and action cannot change how others view adoption or receive the adopted family member.

The death of my grandfather was a disruptive experience – it produced a (temporary) rupture between myself and the world (Holroyd 2007, 9/12). It also alerted me to the potential significance of this type of experience for other adoptees, and in doing so expanded my horizon to see further beyond what was previously in my vision/scope. As a negative dialectical experience (Gadamer 1960/2013, 461), I was transformed in such a way that my previous views on adoption were, at least temporarily, negated.

From the analysis of the events and experiences of adoption in my own life (or the plot of my adoption narrative), it was possible to glean further preunderstandings:

#3: Adoption was done to give adopted children better lives.

#4: Not all adoptees experience adoption in the same way (drawn from my adopted sister's experience).

#5: Everyone will benefit from knowing certain things about their birth and adoption.

#6: Meeting birth family is the ideal – it is not less complicated, but makes for a fuller life.

#7: Openness is preferable over secrecy and silence, and will lead to better outcomes.

#8: 'Nature' is a significant factor in the make-up of a person.

#9: Reunion is not straightforward or easy and does not guarantee resolution.

The second interview with my colleague focused on being Māori, and my relationship with my birth father and his whānau. It was apparent from the resulting narrative that this is the site where most of my identity work is undertaken; Māori identity negotiation has consumed a significant amount of my time and energy and has only expanded over time with personal and professional commitments. Several preunderstandings and value judgements about being Māori are apparent from my experiences:

#10: Being Māori is something within you, inherited with whakapapa. It is not something you choose, it is a feeling and drive that cannot be extinguished.

#11: Feeling Māori is insufficient – you must be accepted and acknowledged by others as Māori.

#12: Being Māori is insufficient – you must engage with and participate in the Māori world.

#13: Those with visible Māori markers will find identifying as Māori easier.

#14: Being brought up with birth whānau gives connection to te ao Māori – without this, authenticity is never possible for the Māori adoptee.

While the above lists are not exhaustive, they identify some of the most prominent preunderstandings derived from my own experience as a Māori adoptee, which I was bringing to my analysis of participant texts/narratives. It was important that I was clear about what my presumptions might be, so that I could guard against premature interpretive closure (Geanellos 1998, 241), or arriving at an understanding "too quickly, too carelessly, or slovenly" (the concept of bridling: Dahlberg, Dahlberg and Nystrom 2008, 130). There are instances in which my experiences and interpretations differ clearly from those of participants', although I do not make all of these explicit in the thesis text. What is important is that I recognise those differences, and retain rather than exclude them from the research findings. One example is where, drawing on the literature, I had conceptualised adoption as producing 'in-betweenness' – after all, this matched with my experience. However, in several of my interviews, participants rebutted this notion, making clear that they did not interpret their position that way at all.

> *The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings*
> (Gadamer 1960, translated by Weinsheimer and Marshall 2013, 282).

This section has outlined the processes followed to ensure reflexive rigour in the research, but there is significant overlap with other forms of rigour outlined in the methods chapter. The aspects of reflexive rigour I have described in this Appendix are derived from hermeneutic phenomenology, ensuring methodological consistency and coherence. Furthermore, clear reflexive processes constitute a form of evaluative rigour, and specifying my pre-understandings supported interpretive rigour (Stiles 1999, 100).

In the remainder of this Appendix, I share a piece of reflective writing that says something further about my positionality with respect to identity and adoption. The writing considers my researcher/subject positions and highlights the multi-dimensionality of research reflexivity.

Reflection on researcher/subject positioning, May 2020

It's not that I was adopted.
I *am* adopted.
A subtle but important distinction. To say 'I was adopted' speaks of adoption in the past tense, as an event or occurrence at one, prior point in time. Been and gone, done and dusted. In contrast, to say 'I am adopted' is to claim a personal quality arising from that original adoptive event or act, a state of being that endures and persists.

Being adopted has always been core to who I am, it has always been 'salient'. It is no great secret that I have tended more towards the 'preoccupied' end of the adoptive identity spectrum. My intense interest grew from having critical but ultimately unanswerable questions growing up, sustained by my observations of the contradictions, minimisation and silences surrounding adoption.

In this sense, I have found my-self at odds with 'optimal' forms of adoptionality. The lady *doth* protest too much! My adoptive 'lens' has been cast as myopic and insular, an unproductive view that can only ever distort, rather than illuminate.

Needing to account for my adoptionality in this academic work is difficult, not in the least because of my social conditioning. Not wanting to invalidate my research focus, or see my research subject to the same critiques that I've experienced personally and socially, I have shied away from sharing my personal connection to what I'm discovering. However, to construe this as some other voice that is *not* mine, would be incorrect.

I *am* adopted. Adoption is at once everything and just a part of who I am. I carry it with me, I am never not adopted. My Māori adoptee voice is always speaking, but in this project it is present in two interrelated forms – those of researcher and subject. What I might intuit as a subject, is examined and interrogated in my role as researcher.

We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are (Nin 1961, 124).

When we are both researcher and subject, seeing things as *we* are enables and compels us to step beyond the immediate bounds of our own subjectivity. Large tracts of this thesis privilege my researcher 'voice', but this is not to say that as reflexive subject I am absent.

Part-way through this research, I was interviewed for a Radio New Zealand story about the adoption of Māori children, which aired in July 2019.[115] In that, I was a subject. Once that story became public, I had to deal with feelings of vulnerability and exposure, and the representation of my voice by another. Parts of my story were omitted and glossed over, simplified to fit a specific narrative. But the radio story had a point, which it achieved. It reminded listeners of *our* existence and *our* struggle.

Similarly to my participants, I provided my story in good faith and relinquished control over its telling. Sharing that humbling experience with my participants was an important reminder of their stake in my research, and the care that I must take with their stories. This comprised another reflexive layer and another dimension of insider positionality.

[115] Hurihanganui, Te Aniwa. 2019. "How Closed Adoption Robbed Māori Children of their Identity". https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/insight/audio/2018703334/how-closed-adoption-robbed-maori-children-of-their-identity

Appendix III: Study Information Sheet

April 2017

The Lived Experiences of Māori Adoptees

Participant Information Sheet

Principal investigator: Supervisors:

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll
PhD candidate
School of Health Sciences
University of Canterbury

Dr Alison Dixon
Adjunct Senior Lecturer
School of Health Sciences

Dr Denise Blake
Lecturer
School of Psychology
Massey University

Tēnā koe

You are invited to take part in a PhD research project about the experiences of Māori adoptees. Please take your time to think about what the study involves and decide whether you wish to participate. Taking part is completely voluntary.

What is this study about?
Historically, New Zealand has had a high rate of adoption; at its peak in 1969, New Zealand had the highest number of domestic adoptions (per capita) in the Western world, with more than 6% of children placed for adoption. Many were Māori, although exact numbers are not known. In past decades countless authors and studies have explored the impact of adoption, but the accounts of legally-adopted Māori children remain relatively unexplored. By documenting the stories and experiences of Māori adoptees, this study aims to address a significant gap in current understandings of adoption in New Zealand.

Who is being asked to take part?
Individuals of Māori descent legally adopted between 1955 and 1985 will be identified (through the researcher's local and professional networks and/or advertisement of the research) and invited to take part in the study.

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to take part you will be invited to share your experiences as a Māori adoptee in a one-on-one interview with the principal investigator. This will take between 1 and 1.5 hours, and can be held in a venue of your choice. Following the interview, you will have an opportunity to make changes to your interview transcript, and provide feedback on the initial analysis. This can be done either by email or in person, depending on what is most convenient for you.

What information will be collected, and what will it be used for?
With your permission, your interview will be tape-recorded so that it can be transcribed later by the principal investigator. A copy of your interview transcript will be made available to you to comment on or amend. All audio recordings will be stored in restricted access folders on the University of Canterbury secure computer network, and the principal investigator's password-protected personal network drive. At the end of the study

the data will be kept securely by the School of Health Sciences for 10 years. After 10 years, the data will be destroyed.

What are the potential risks and benefits in taking part?

- *Risks:* The subject matter of this research is of a personal nature, and may be sensitive for you to discuss. Care will be taken to ensure that the contact, interview and follow-up processes are 'safe' for you, and that your personal boundaries relating to disclosure and involvement are respected. If you feel stressed by answering any of the questions the researcher will offer to arrange appropriate assistance, or you can contact the Health Line for advice on 0800 611 116.
- *Benefits:* This research study aims to generate new knowledge about the experience and impact of adoption, specifically in relation to Māori adoptees. Although adoption rates in New Zealand have sharply declined, the findings of this study may be relevant to the growing population of international adoptees. As an individual participant, it is hoped that there might be some therapeutic benefit for you as a result of telling your story within the research, and that talking through your post-adoption journey might yield some insights of value to you in your current circumstances.

Can I change my mind and not take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study and if you do agree to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. During interviews you do not have to answer all the questions, and you may withdraw your participation in the interview at any time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm your willingness to be involved.

Who do I contact if I have any concerns about this research?

If you have concerns about this research, contact:

The Chair,
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee;
human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

If you have any queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact an independent Health and Disability Advocate, South Island 0800 377 766; free fax (NZ wide) 0800 2787 7678 (0800 2 SUPPORT); email (NZ wide): advocate@hdc.org.nz

Confidentiality & results

A PhD is a public document via the UC library database. However, your name and personal details are strictly confidential and will not be mentioned in any reports on this study. If you wish, you will be provided a copy of the summary of results at the conclusion of the research.

Where can I get more information about the study?

For more information about the research study, feel free to contact the principal investigator or the senior supervisor:

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll
University of Canterbury
(03) 3 693 516
annabel.ahuriri-driscoll@canterbury.ac.nz

Who pays for the research?

This study is funded by the University of Canterbury.

Review

This research study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee (UCHEC).

Thank you for making the time to read about, and consider taking part in this research study.

Appendix IV: Study Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

The Lived Experiences of Māori Adoptees

Participant Consent Form

- I have been given a full explanation of this project (information sheet dated August 2013 and verbal explanation) and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.
- I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.
- I consent to my interview being audio-taped.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me.
- I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after ten years.
- I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study. I have provided my email details below for this.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix V: Study Debriefing Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

The Lived Experiences of Māori Adoptees

Participant Debriefing Sheet

Kia ora

Many thanks for taking part in this PhD research on the lived experiences of Māori adoptees. There is a second strand to this project not mentioned specifically in the documentation you have received, or the interview just completed, which this debriefing sheet explains.

The full title of this research is "*Ka tū te whare, ka ora: the constructed and constructive identities of the Māori adoptee*". **Identity** is thus a major focus of the study (as it is also of adoption literature). However, I chose not to refer to identity directly prior to or during the interview, so that this would not unduly influence your discussion of your adoption experiences. I have attempted to explore identity more critically (*does* 'identity' emerge in discussion of adoption experiences? If so, how? If not, how and why not?) by 1) using an alternative title for the information sheet and consent form; and 2) not asking about identity as an adoption-related issue in the first instance. Some of the later questions/prompts in the interview schedule asked about identity implicitly – for example, how you think about yourself and how you perceive that others see you.

Please be assured that the identity-related aims of this research were concealed in the interests of collecting robust and credible data; nonetheless, if you have any further concerns associated with this approach, please feel free to contact

The Chair,
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee;
human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Alternatively, if you have any queries or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may wish to contact an independent Health and Disability Advocate, South Island 0800 377 766; free fax (NZ wide) 0800 2787 7678 (0800 2 SUPPORT); email (NZ wide): advocate@hdc.org.nz

You are free to withdraw your participation and data from this study, if practically possible, without penalty.

Thanks once again for making the time to take part in this research study.

Appendix VI: Human Ethics Committee Correspondence

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll

From: Human Ethics
Sent: Wednesday, 4 July 2012 10:41 a.m.
To: Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll
Cc: Jeffrey Gage
Subject: HEC APPLICATION 2012/70

Dear Annabel

The Human Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and raised several questions which they would be grateful for your feedback on/response to.

- In all relevant documents, please replace the contact "Mike Grimshaw" with the "The Chair, University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee; human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz".
- In the debriefing sheet, please state that participants can withdraw participation and data, if practically possible, without penalty.
- In the advertisement, please state that the project is for a PhD.
- In the information sheet, please state that a PhD is public document via the UC library database.

The Committee would be grateful if you could address the above issues in writing by amending your application and/or supporting documents accordingly; please return them to me for the Committee's further consideration. These can be sent via email attaching one copy of the documents as necessary. If you wish to disagree with any comments, please carefully and briefly state your argument.

Please note that in the interests of ensuring a swift resolution to the issues raised by the Committee, a copy of this email has been forwarded to your supervisor to assist in any amendments/clarification required.

Please contact the Chair, Associate Professor Grimshaw at michael.grimshaw@canterbury.ac.nz, if you wish to discuss any of the above comments prior to submitting your revised application.

Kind regards

Lynda

Lynda Griffioen
Secretary
Ethics Committees
Hours: Monday 8.30am-2.30pm, Wednesday 8.30am-5.00pm & Friday 8.15am-2.00pm
University of Canterbury
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8140, New Zealand
Telephone +64 3 364 2987 Extn 45588

Appendix VII: Human Ethics Committee Approval

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2012/70

11 July 2012

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll
Health Sciences Centre
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Annabel

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "Ka tū te whare, ka ora: the constructed and constructive identities of the Māori adoptee" has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 5 July 2012.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Michael Grimshaw
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

Appendix VIII: Māori Research Advisory Group Approval

Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll

From: Lindsey MacDonald
Sent: Wednesday, 6 June 2012 8:20 p.m.
To: Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll
Subject: Maori Consultation process complete.

Tena koe Annabel

On behalf of MRAG (the University of Canterbury Maori Research Advisory Group) I am pleased to convey MRAG's thanks for allowing us to see your work.

MRAG considers consultation on this particular project complete, and commends the research to the relevant ethics bodies. I attach the fulsome praise of the UC's Maori Research Professor.

Kind regards, Lindsey

Dr. Lindsey Te Ata o Tu MacDonald
Lecturer (Political Science)
Research Consultant-Maori (Acting)
Room 620, English Bldg
Department of Political Science
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Canterbury
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8140
Ph +64-(0)-3-3642687
Fax +64-(0)-3-3642007

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** "Angus Hikairo Macfarlane" <angus.macfarlane@canterbury.ac.nz>
> **Date:** 5 June 2012 6:47:56 PM NZST
> **To:** "Lindsey MacDonald" <lindsey.macdonald@canterbury.ac.nz>, "John Pirker" <john.pirker@canterbury.ac.nz>, "Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll" <annabel.ahuriri-driscoll@canterbury.ac.nz>, "Jan Wikaira" <jan.wikaira@canterbury.ac.nz>, "Ken Smart" <ken.smart@canterbury.ac.nz>, "Jim Anglem" <jim.anglem@canterbury.ac.nz>
> **Subject: RE: My apologies; Annabel's full documentation for review by MRAG**
>
> Kia ora tatou
>
> This is an excellent PhD proposal and I applaud the accuracy and attention to detail in all documents. Kia manawanui.
>
> Nga mihi
>
> Angus
>
> Dr Angus Hikairo Macfarlane
> Professor of Maori Research

Appendix IX: Interview Schedule

Q1. First of all, could you start by telling me about your birth and subsequent adoption, what you know of the circumstances or underlying reasons?
- Your age at adoption?
- Birth parents? Adoptive parents?
- Sources of birth and adoption information? Who relayed this information to you?
- Are there differing accounts?

Q2. When were you first aware that you were adopted?
- Your age?
- Who told you, what, how?
- Associated feelings or memories?

Q3. Could you please tell me a bit about your adoptive family – your parents, siblings (adopted/non) if any?
- Māori? Pākehā?

Q4. What was 'growing up adopted' like for you?
- Any difficulties?
- Strengths/positives?
- Specific experiences or memories?

What does 'being adopted' mean to you?

Q5. Have you sought out your birth parents or family?
- Why or why not?
- If yes, how did you go about this? What was the experience of meeting your birth parent/s like? What relationships do you have with your birth family now?
- If no, do you have any plans to in the future?

Q6. Are there ongoing impacts or influences of adoption in your everyday life?

Q7. How do you think of yourself? How do you describe yourself to others? Is there anything you do that signals to the world who you are?
- As an adoptee? To what extent does being adopted factor in your thinking about yourself? In how others think of you?
    - How do you think being adopted influenced your view of yourself as a child? Your relationships with others?
    - How about as an adult? (your view of yourself and your relationships with others?) How has that view changed with respect to meeting (or not meeting) your birth family?
    - How does adoption influence your view of yourself as a parent, or your perspective on parenting?

- Being Māori?
    - How do you describe yourself in relation to Pākehā? In relation to other Māori?
    - Does being adopted influence your view of yourself as Māori? How do you think it does or doesn't influence others' views of you as Māori?
    - What has 'being Māori' been like for you? Difficulties? Strengths/positives? Specific experiences or memories? Learning from others?
    - What does being Māori mean to you?
    - How does being Māori factor in your everyday life?

Appendix X: Transcriber Confidentiality Form

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

TRANSCRIPTION CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Thank you for your participation in the research project **'Ka tu te whare, ka ora: the constructed and constructive identities of the Maori adoptee'**. Protecting the confidentiality of the research participants is essential and you are therefore asked to sign the following confidentiality agreement.

I, _____, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all verbal information and audio recordings received from the research team for the above project. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual and the content of any discussion that may be revealed during transcription

2. To not make copies of any audio files or computerised files of the transcribed focus groups, unless specifically approved to do so by the Researcher Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll.

3. To store all audio files and materials in a password protected computer or safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

4. To return all materials to Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll in a complete and timely manner at the completion of transcription

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents or audio files from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices on completion of transcription.

I am aware that I can be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio files and/or files to which I will have access.

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix XI: Data Analysis Process

Table 10: Textual analysis process designed for application in this research: a Ricoeurian hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry underpinned by critical realism and kaupapa Māori

Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation (1976, 1981)	**Application**	**Critical realism steps**
Distanciation • Distancing of text from its author, original context and audience	• Transcribing of interview text	
Appropriation • Meaning of the text taken on and altered by interpreter • Fusion of horizons between text and interpreter	• Open-ness and receptivity - 'phenomenological attitude' • Researcher self-reflection • 1st reading of the text – relatively naïve	
Explanation • Interpretation of text for what it says – structure, internal relations and parts of the text; plot, actions, actants, narration, metaphor	- Open coding – references to identity, adoption experience, narrative • Inductive/thematic analysis • *Hermeneutics of empathy → hermeneutics of suspicion*	**Identification of demi-regularities** • Tendencies that can be seen in trends or patterns in empirical data • Identified through dominant codes
Understanding • Interpretation of text for what it talks about – parts and whole, compared to researcher's pre-understandings, details regarding author and context, and different forms of extended discourse • Institutional discourses, meta-narratives, counter-narratives, contradictions • Hermeneutic arc	• Selective reading/'theoretical coding' focused on nature-culture divide discourse • Population of data tables with entire pieces of text/units of meaning, developed into themes + questions for further inquiry • *Hermeneutics of suspicion → hermeneutics of naïveté* (post-critical 2nd level naïveté) • Kaupapa Māori considerations of socio-political/ cultural contexts	**Abduction or theoretical re-description** • Using theoretical concepts and situating within a macro-level context **Retroduction** • Identification of the social and contextual conditions in which causal mechanisms take effect • Moving from concrete to abstract, and back again

Appendix XII: Adoptee Race/Ethnicity Counts, 1970

The tables on the following two pages are taken from a Social Welfare Research Monograph dated 1976, entitled "Ex-Nuptial Children and Their Parents" (O'Neill et al. 1976). The report compiled the findings from a survey of all ex-nuptial births in 1970. The resulting sample was considered to represent 84% of all ex-nuptial births in that year. Survey respondents included parents of children who were relinquished for adoption.

Table 4 (p. 446) shows the reported race of children, and Tables 17 and 18 (pp. 454-5) that of mothers and fathers. The conceptualisation of descent/ethnicity in terms of blood quantum is evident, as is the definition of Māori as 'half or more'. These tables show that the number of Māori children (recorded as quarter and over degree of blood) born in 1970, included in the survey and who were adopted out, was **182/1111** (**16.4%**)

Applying the 'half-caste or more' rule, this total discounted 99 children deemed to be 'quarter-caste'. There is no data recorded for those who were thought to be less than quarter-caste, even though talk of 'eighths' and 'sixteenths' existed at the time.

Tables 17 and 18 show that 34 quarter-caste mothers and 46 quarter-caste fathers were also counted as Europeans rather than Māori, with implications for their child's race.

The sample as a whole was considered to contain significantly fewer Māori children and Māori mothers than would be expected had the sample been drawn randomly from the population of all ex-nuptial births ($p < .001$, $p < .05$ respectively). Māori fathers were overrepresented; almost 23% of the fathers were Māori, indicating there were considerably more Māori fathers of ex-nuptial children than would be expected on the basis of Māori representation in the general population.

The total of 8793 recorded Māori adoptions between 1951 and 1981, out of a total of 75,386 legal adoptions (**11.66%)** likely excludes a number of children of Māori descent who were not recorded as such for the reasons described above and in Chapter One.

Table 4 RACE OF CHILD (Q. 2)

Race of Child	Adopt.	Single	Cohab.	Misc.	N.T.	Total
Full European	871	527	262	163	10	1,833
¾ European, ¼ Maori	99	142	139	41	1	422
Total 'European'	970	669	401	204	11	2,255
Full Maori	20	95	159	50	-	234
¾ Maori, ¼ European	14	40	59	21	-	134
½ Maori, ½ European	46	107	132	49	-	334
Maori-Polynesian blends	3	11	15	9	-	38
Maori-Other blends	-	9	5	2	-	16
Total 'Maori'	83	262	370	131	-	846
Samoan, or mixed races predominantly Samoan	16	32	22	17	1	88
Cook Islander, or mixed races predominantly Cook Islander	7	24	30	11	1	73
Niuean, or mixed races predominantly Niuean	-	18	14	1	-	33
Other Pacific Islander, or mixed races predominantly Other Pacific Islander	9	9	5	1	-	24
Total 'Pacific Islander'	32	83	71	30	2	218
Chinese, or mixed races predominantly Chinese	6	5	4	-	1	16
Indian, or mixed races predominantly Indian	5	1	1	1	-	8
Other Races, or mixed races predominantly Other Races	5	10	7	3	-	25
Others, not classifiable	2	-	3	2	-	7
Not Known	8	39	9	28	247	331
Total	1,111	1,069	866	399	261	3,706

N.B. A more detailed classification of the race of the survey children was available. However, this detailed classification was not used in the survey analysis and it is considered that the classification used above is sufficiently detailed for most purposes. The racial definitions used in this table follow those used for census and most other statistical purposes.

Table 5 PLACEMENT OF CHILD AT COMPLETION OF ENQUIRY (Q. 3)

Placement Situation	Adopt.	Single	Cohab.	Misc.	N.T.	Total
Placed for adoption - not with relatives	1,054	-	-	-	-	1,054
Placed for adoption - with relatives	57	-	-	-	-	57
With mother - not cohabiting	-	1,069	-	-	-	1,069
With mother - cohabiting with father	-	-	858	-	-	858
With mother - cohabiting with other male	-	-	8	-	-	8
With mother - legitimated by marriage to child's father	-	-	-	146	-	146
With mother - 'legitimated' by marriage to someone else	-	-	-	11	-	11
With other relatives	-	-	-	100	-	100
In licensed foster home	-	-	-	52	-	52
In hospital or institution	-	-	-	22	-	22
Committed to the care of Superintendent of Child Welfare	-	-	-	15	-	15
Dead	-	-	-	53	-	53
Not traced	-	-	-	-	261	261
Total	1,111	1,069	866	399	261	3,706

N.B. The classification of placement of child in this table is the classification on which the sub-division of the sample into major sub-groups was based. Chapter 5 presents further details of the classification of the sample into placement sub-groups.

Table 17 MOTHER'S RACE (Q.11)

Mother's Race	Adopt.	Single	Cohab.	Misc.	Total
Full European	972	629	344	188	2,133
¾ European, ¼ Maori	34	58	59	16	167
Total 'European'	1,006	687	403	204	2,300
Full Maori	35	193	250	94	572
¾ Maori, ¼ European	10	23	28	14	75
½ Maori, ½ European	23	74	114	32	243
Maori-Polynesian blends	-	1	2	-	3
Maori-Other blends	1	1	1	1	4
Total 'Maori'	69	292	395	141	897
Samoan, or mixed races predominantly Samoan	13	26	15	16	70
Cook Islander, or mixed races predominantly Cook Islander	3	19	23	8	53
Niuean, or mixed races predominantly Niuean	-	20	15	1	36
Other Pacific Islander, or mixed races predominantly Other Pacific Islander	4	5	1	1	11
Total 'Pacific Islander'	20	70	54	26	170
Chinese, or mixed races predominantly Chinese	4	-	3	-	7
Indian, or mixed races predominantly Indian	3	-	2	-	5
Other Races, or mixed races predominantly Other Races	-	3	-	1	4
Others, not classifiable	2	-	-	-	2
Not known	7	17	9	27	60
Total	1,111	1,069	866	399	3,445

N.B. A more detailed classification of the race of the survey mothers was available. However, this detailed classification was not used in the survey analysis and it is considered that the classification used above is sufficiently detailed for most purposes. The racial definitions used in this table follow those used for census and most other statistical purposes.

Table 18 FATHER'S RACE (Q.11)

Father's Race	Adopt.	Single	Cohab.	Misc.	Total
Full European	936	673	380	208	2,197
¾ European, ¼ Maori	46	40	52	15	153
Total 'European'	982	713	432	223	2,350
Full Maori	39	133	212	68	452
¾ Maori, ¼ European	10	13	22	7	52
½ Maori, ½ European	35	76	101	28	240
Maori-Polynesian blends	1	1	3	1	6
Maori-Other blends	-	4	2	1	7
Total 'Maori'	85	227	340	105	757
Samoan, or mixed races predominantly Samoan	10	29	19	15	73
Cook Islander, or mixed races predominantly Cook Islander	6	22	39	12	79
Niuean, or mixed races predominantly Niuean	1	13	13	-	27
Other Pacific Islander, or mixed races predominantly Other Pacific Islander	8	9	5	5	27
Total 'Pacific Islander'	25	73	76	32	206
Chinese, or mixed races predominantly Chinese	4	6	3	-	13
Indian, or mixed races predominantly Indian	2	3	-	-	5
Other Races, or mixed races predominantly Other Races	2	5	3	1	11
Others, not classifiable	-	-	-	-	-
Not known	11	42	12	38	103
Total	1,111	1,069	866	399	3,445

N.B. A more detailed classification of the race of the survey fathers was available. However, this detailed classification was not used in the survey analysis and it is considered that the classification used above is sufficiently detailed for most purposes. The racial definitions used in this table follow those used for census and most other statistical purposes.